

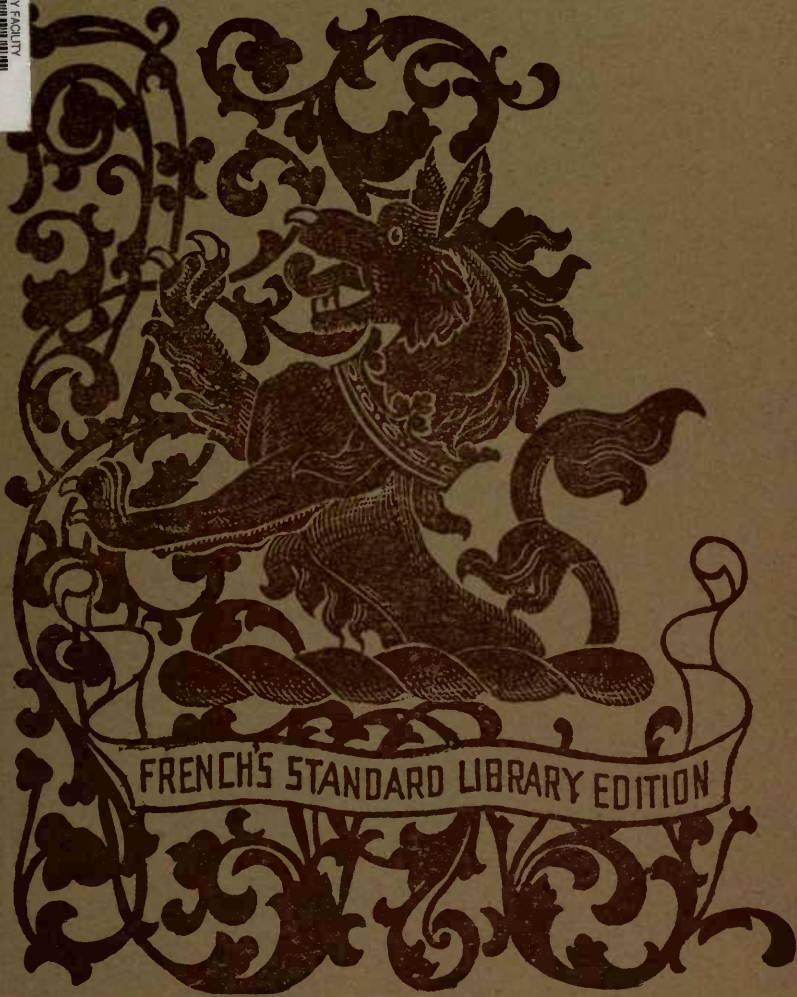
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THE SHOW SHOP

BY
JAMES FORBES



SAMUEL FRENCH, 25 West 45th St., New York

HOTEL UNIVERSE

Play without intermission by Philip Barry. Produced originally by the Theatre Guild at the Martin Beck Theatre, New York. 5 males, 4 females. 1 exterior scene. Modern costumes.

One of the most striking and original plays ever written by an American, and on the occasion of its production in New York it aroused heated controversy. It is the most ambitious and brilliant play Mr. Barry has ever attempted, and is concerned with the baffling problems which every adult human being is at some time forced to face. The characters seem hardly to exist at all in relation to other people, which is surely the reason why Mr. Barry discovered (somewhat as Chekov discovered) that to invent a plot for them would be to deprive them of the kind of reality he was after. These people are essentially introspective, centripetal, literally self-seeking. And what are they after? Just an answer to the question that every thinking human being must ask himself—and vainly: What is life? What is death? Where are we going, and why? What is the meaning of past, present and future? Published only in bound form.

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Comedy in 3 acts. By Eden Phillpotts. Produced originally by Charles Coburn in New York City. 9 males, 13 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes.

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(Royalty on application.) PRICE 75 CENTS.

THE SHOW SHOP
A FARCICAL SATIRE IN FOUR ACTS

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A Farical Satire in Four Acts

BY
JAMES FORBES

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THE SHOW SHOP

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THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

SADIE
WILBUR TOMPKINS
JEROME BELDEN
MAX ROSENBAUM
EFFIE BRINKLEY
JOHNNY BRINKLEY
MRS. DEAN
BETTINA DEAN
A NIGHT CLERK
MR. BILLINGS
GRANBY SMITH
A SCENE PAINTER
MAGINNIS
GOLDMAN
HICKSON
STEVE
MISS DONAHUE
MISS FARRINGTON
MISS TOBY
MONK
WALTERS

The Scenes of the play are laid in the office of MAX ROSENBAUM, New York City, the parlour of the Palace Hotel, Punxatawney, the stage of a Broadway Theatre and the apartment of JEROME BELDEN.

The action covers a period of time from August to October, a month intervening between the first and second acts, six weeks between the second and third, and fourteen hours between the third and fourth.

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LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

THE SHOW SHOP

Original cast, as first presented at the Hudson Theatre,
New York, December 31, 1914.

It is arranged in the order in which the characters first
appear.

SADIE	<i>Edna Aug</i>
WILBUR TOMPKINS	<i>Ned A. Sparks</i>
JEROME BELDEN	<i>Douglas Fairbanks</i>
MAX ROSENBAUM	<i>George Sidney</i>
EFFIE BRINKLEY	<i>Olive May</i>
JOHNNY BRINKLEY	<i>William Sampson</i>
MRS. DEAN	<i>Zelda Sears</i>
BETTINA DEAN	<i>Patricia Collinge</i>
A NIGHT CLERK	<i>Sam Coit</i>
MR. BILLINGS	<i>Stapleton Kent</i>
GRANBY SMITH	<i>Felix Krembs</i>
A SCENE PAINTER	<i>William Butler</i>
MAGINNIS	<i>Harry G. Bates</i>
GOLDMAN	<i>George Colt</i>
HICKSON	<i>Walter Young</i>
STEVE	<i>Charles Emerson</i>
MISS DONAHUE	<i>Lillian Tucker</i>
MISS FARRINGTON	<i>Rhy Alexander</i>
MISS TOBY	<i>Becky Bruce</i>
MONK	<i>Al Gilmore</i>
WALTERS	<i>Edward Moore</i>

THE SHOW SHOP

THE FIRST ACT

The private office, in a Broadway theatre building, of MAX ROSENBAUM, theatrical manager. On the right of the room is a door opening on a hall that leads to a private entrance to the stage, on the left a door to the office of ROSENBAUM'S stage director, WILBUR TOMPKINS, and at the back another door to the outer offices and the waiting-room. At the left of the room are several chairs and a table on which stands a scenic artist's model of a stage setting, on the right a flat-topped desk and a swivel chair. Against the walls are filing cabinets and above them, encircling the room, is a row of framed "flashlights" of scenes from a ROSENBAUM production. In the most prominent position, over the centre door, is a large framed photograph of ROSENBAUM. Tacked to the walls are several "half-sheets" to be used in advertising ROSENBAUM'S forthcoming production, "The Wallop."

It is eleven o'clock of a morning in August. On a bench in the waiting-room is the usual row of patient and eternally hopeful actors and actresses, seeking positions. They exchange greetings with SADIE, ROSENBAUM'S secretary, as she comes through the waiting-room into the private office. She closes the door.

SADIE is pretty, quick-witted, clever-tongued, apparently bored with life yet incurably romantic. She takes a passionate interest in the affairs of the office, waging an eternal feud with TOMPKINS, the stage director; in fact, assuming a proprietary attitude toward the business, and, while admiring ROSENBAUM enormously, does

not hesitate to criticise even him. She is carrying the morning's mail, several telegrams, a manuscript of a play and a set of "parts." As she moves about the room she sings a popular, sentimental ballad of the day.

SADIE. [*Singing.*] "You made me what I yam today——"

[*She picks up a newspaper, looks at it, smiles scornfully. Has she got her picture in the paper again? [She throws it down.]*

[*Singing.*] "I hope you're satisfied,
You dragged me down, and down and down,
That cannot be deny-ed."

[*Laying the parts on the desk.*

"I hope I've copied these parts all right, and
now that we must part——"

[*She slams the manuscript on the desk.*

I wish you all kinds of good luck.

[*Singing.*] "'Tis the coise of an achin' heart,
'Tis the coise——"

[*The telephone bell rings sharply. She picks up the receiver. Sure, I want it. 7776 Bryant. [Wearily.] 7-7-7-6 Bryant. [Freezingly.] I beg your pardon; I gave you the right number. [She listens impatiently, then passionately exclaims.] As Heaven is my judge, I gave you the right number. [She waits.] As woman to woman. [She listens again, then grows furiously angry.] Well, Madam, if you'll give me a chance I'll explain. I called up Central and said I wanted the box-office and wanted to speak to the Treasurer, please—— Yes, that's right—— Yeppeie. Three sevens and a six. [Laughs affectedly.] Oh, that's all right, dearie. Yes, I'll hold it. [She stands waiting, shifting from one foot to another, and changing the receiver from hand to hand. She sighs and perches on the end of the desk and, presently, to relieve the tedium, begins to sing the ballad again, emphasising its pathos.] Hello. [Crossly.] Hello! [Smiling coyly.] Oh, is that you, Harry? This is Sadie. What did the manager say about*

letting Mr. Rosenbaum have your stage for rehearsal today? From eleven till one? Much obliged. Say, Harry, I'd like a couple for tonight. Selling out! Is that so? Ah, go on, Harry, slip me a couple and mark 'em "Press." What! Take me home after the show? Sure, if anybody's got to stand on my feet in the subway I'd just as lief it'd be you, darling.

[*As she replaces the receiver TOMPKINS, a lean, lank individual of saturnine appearance, the incarnation of pessimism, enters from his office.*]

TOMPKINS. Hello, Sadie! Have the scene models come?

SADIE. No.

TOMPKINS. Get on that phone to that scenic artist.

SADIE. Hello, give me 261 Greeley, and don't keep me waiting like the last time.

TOMPKINS. Give him my love and ask him how in thunder I'm going to put on a show without scenery.

SADIE. 261 Greeley? I'm speaking for Mr. Tompkins, Mr. Rosenbaum's stage manager.

TOMPKINS. [*Indignantly.*] Director! Director!

SADIE. What about those models for our new play, "The Wallop"? [*To TOMPKINS.*] Some title!

TOMPKINS. Some play!

SADIE. Mr. Rosenbaum thinks it's a masterpiece.

TOMPKINS. It's a mess.

SADIE. What? All right! [*To TOMPKINS.*] Be right over.

TOMPKINS. Got the script and parts ready?

SADIE. [*Giving him the manuscript and the parts.*] There's your copy. Take 'em away and chloroform 'em. I've had to copy the parts for this show, but you bet your life I'll never go to see it.

TOMPKINS. There's going to be a whole lot of people side-step this. Where's the fourth act?

SADIE. Hasn't been handed in yet. I dread it.

TOMPKINS. Cheer up, sister; it can't be any worse than these.

SADIE. Well, if it is, it's going to make those three acts awful envious. Oh, here's a couple of letters for you.

TOMPKINS. [*Opening the letters.*] Where's Rosie?

SADIE. Over to K. & E.'s, battling for a route. [*She sings.*] "You made me what I yam today."

TOMPKINS. [*Wearily.*] Must you do that?

SADIE. I can't help it if I have an ear for music.

TOMPKINS. [*Reading the letter.*] Gillette's thrown up her part.

[*Disgusted, he throws the letter on the desk.*]

SADIE. Isn't that the limit! I told Mr. Rosenbaum who to get for that part. She's coming in to see him today.

TOMPKINS. Who is she?

SADIE. Bettina Dean.

TOMPKINS. Huh!

SADIE. Best-looking girl that has been in this office this season.

TOMPKINS. Huh!

[*He reads the second letter.*]

SADIE. The only thing that worries me is, if Mr. Rosenbaum doesn't like her, I'm afraid I'll have to play the part myself.

TOMPKINS. You hate yourself, don't you? This letter means we lose Gilmore, too.

[*He throws it on the desk.*]

SADIE. Are Gillette and Gilmore married?

TOMPKINS. Yes, poor Gilmore.

SADIE. What was he going to play? Who is he, anyhow?

TOMPKINS. Some truck-driver Rosie engaged to play a man about town.

SADIE. Lucky it's a small part. So hard to get leading men. All of them dancing at the cabarets.

TOMPKINS. [*Going.*] Time some of the bluffs in this business were doing something.

SADIE. There are a lot of actors waiting out there to see you.

TOMPKINS. Actors! There are none.

SADIE. What'll I do?

TOMPKINS. Get rid of 'em.

SADIE. How?

TOMPKINS. Tell 'em I'm dead.

SADIE. That's going to keep them happy all day.

[TOMPKINS *turns, glares at SADIE, then goes into his office, slamming the door. SADIE is laughing when the door from the waiting-room is thrown open and a breezy, good-looking type of the wealthy American youth of today comes in hurriedly. It is JEROME BELDEN. SADIE rises majestically, walks over to him and points to the letters on the door.*

SADIE. "Private" isn't painted on the other side of the door just to make it look stylish.

JEROME. I'm looking for Mr. Rosenbaum.

SADIE. That doesn't give you any license to crowd your personality into his private office.

JEROME. I'm sorry. I saw the door open and just blew in.

SADIE. The wind's shifted; blow out.

[*She turns away.*

JEROME. [*Following her.*] I want to see Mr. Rosenbaum.

SADIE. You want to see an oculist. There's a sign out there—"No Vacancies for Actors."

JEROME. I'm not an actor. I'm a business man.

SADIE. What's a business man doing in a theatrical office? Who are you?

JEROME. Jerome Belden.

SADIE. Jerome Belden! That's a swell name, but it means nothing in my young life. Did you have an appointment?

JEROME. No, but I must see him.

SADIE. [*Sarcastically.*] Sorry, but he isn't in.

[*She moves to the chair at the desk.*

JEROME. When will he be back?

SADIE. When he returns, fair stranger.

JEROME. Don't you keep tabs on Mr. Rosenbaum?

SADIE. I'm his stenographer, not his wife.

JEROME. Oh! Has Miss Dean been here?

SADIE. What Miss Dean?

JEROME. Bettina Dean!

SADIE. I'm not allowed to divulge office secrets.

[*She sits.*]

JEROME. [*Offering a bill.*] Here.

SADIE. [*Waving it aside.*] Nothing doing.

JEROME. [*Smiling.*] Oh, go on, run up to Huyler's.

SADIE. [*Taking it.*] That's different. Mother told me I was never to take money from a strange gentleman. But, gee, none of the fellows I know have any.

JEROME. [*Sitting across from her.*] Let's get down to cases. Have you ever seen Miss Dean?

SADIE. Best-looking girl that has been in this office this season.

JEROME. [*Offering another bill.*] Go on, get another box.

SADIE. One box a day is my limit.

JEROME. Look here, have you ever been in love?

SADIE. [*Sighing.*] It's chronic with me.

JEROME. That's the way I feel about Miss Dean. I want you to help me.

SADIE. I'm no first aid to stage-door Johnnies.

JEROME. Johnnies? I want to marry her.

SADIE. What? My, how romantic!

JEROME. I want her to marry me and give up the stage. Her mother can't see that at all. I heard last night that Mr. Rosenbaum is to see her today. If she gets this engagement it's all off.

SADIE. Oh, I see. [*Sympathetically.*] Then you'll be parted.

JEROME. Now you see what we're up against.

SADIE. Isn't real life just like the stage?

JEROME. Now come on; be a good fellow. Tell me, has she been here?

SADIE. Not yet. Her appointment's for twelve today.

JEROME. Good! [*He rises and goes to the door.*] That gives me a chance to see her before she gets here. Say,

what's your favourite brand of flower? [SADIE *smiles.*] No? Well, I'm just going to smother you in violets.

[*He leaves hurriedly.*]

SADIE. [*Wistfully.*] Some girls have all the luck.

[TOMPKINS *bursts in from his office.*]

TOMPKINS. Where's that script?

SADIE. I gave it to you once; if you're going to mislay it like that I'll put a bell on it.

[*She rises and gives the manuscript to him.*]

TOMPKINS. What was it I wanted to ask you?

SADIE. How should I know? I'm no mind-reader.

TOMPKINS. Can the persiflage. Oh, yes, what theatre did Rosie get for rehearsal today?

SADIE. You can have the stage downstairs from eleven till one.

[MAX ROSENBAUM, *a jovial embodiment of his race, enters briskly from the outer office. He carries a theatrical "route" book.*]

SADIE. Good morning, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Hello, Sadie. [*To TOMPKINS.*] Hello, Sunshine. We've got to slam this show through. We open in two weeks. Sadie, has the printer sent the proof of that three-sheet?

SADIE. It's right outside.

ROSENBAUM. Bring it in.

[SADIE *goes.*]

TOMPKINS. Get a good route?

ROSENBAUM. A pippin!

[*He opens the book.*]

TOMPKINS. [*Sarcastically.*] Well, what burgs did you horn out of them?

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading.*] We open in Toronto, jump to Washington—

TOMPKINS. Jump! It's a leap!

ROSENBAUM. Yes, but if I can get the President to see the show.

TOMPKINS. What have you got against Wilson?

ROSENBAUM. I'll get him to endorse it.

TOMPKINS. Why should he?

ROSENBAUM. Didn't I vote for him?

TOMPKINS. Where do we scatter after Washington?

ROSENBAUM. Montreal, then Wilmington, Schenectady, Hartford, Rochester, New Haven, Troy and Punxsatawney.

TOMPKINS. Just hitting the high places. What are you doing, booking "The Wallop" with a ouija board?

ROSENBAUM. And a week in Philadelphia.

TOMPKINS. This is a healthy show to wake up Philadelphia.

ROSENBAUM. Say it will wake 'em up so hard, it'll give 'em insomnia.

[*He places the route book on the desk. SADIE enters, carrying a roll of paper.*]

SADIE. Here's the proof of that three-sheet.

ROSENBAUM. Here, Sadie, stand up. [ROSENBAUM *places a chair. SADIE stands on it and holds up the three-sheet.*

ROSENBAUM *reads.*] "Max Rosenbaum politely proffers 'The Wallop,' by Edgerton Porter, staged under the direction of Max Rosenbaum and Wilbur Tompkins."

TOMPKINS. [*Satirically.*] Couldn't you work your monicker in some place else?

ROSENBAUM. I might make it, "By Max Rosenbaum and——" [TOMPKINS *laughs.*] Well, I gave the author the idea and a lot of the dialogue.

TOMPKINS. Why pay him royalties? Why didn't you write it yourself?

ROSENBAUM. I haven't time to do the hack work. Sadie, tell the printer to put Max on one line and Rosenbaum on the other, and cut down the size of the author's name. Who is he, anyway?

[SADIE, *agreeing, goes.*]

[ROSENBAUM *puts on his office-coat, then sits, reading his mail.*]

TOMPKINS. Got a minute?

ROSENBAUM. I haven't a thing to do but listen to your troubles. What's on your mind?

TOMPKINS. [*Sitting.*] Oh, nothing! First rehearsal at eleven, no last act, no scenery, no leading woman——

ROSENBAUM. Gillette quit?

TOMPKINS. [*Sarcastically.*] She's ill.

[*He hands ROSENBAUM a letter.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading it.*] She'd had a better offer.

TOMPKINS. It's like her to wait till the first rehearsal.

ROSENBAUM. I was afraid she'd throw us down. I've got just the girl. I told her that if anything happened to Gillette, I'd give her the first chance. I've an appointment with her today at twelve.

[*He presses the buzzer on his desk.*

TOMPKINS. [*Handing ROSENBAUM the other letter.*] Gilmore's quit, too.

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading.*] Well, you didn't like him. What kind of a type do you want?

TOMPKINS. He ought to look like a clubman, wear his clothes well. He sings a song in the first act, dances a tango——

ROSENBAUM. For sixty dollars a week, you want a cross between John Drew, Caruso and Vernon Castle. That's easy! [*SADIE rushes in.*] Sadie, telephone Miss Dean, over to the St. Agnes: tell her not to wait until twelve o'clock, but to come right over.

SADIE. [*Disconsolately.*] Right over?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, and make out a couple of contracts and leave the salary blank.

[*SADIE rushes out.*

TOMPKINS. Is it Bettina Dean?

ROSENBAUM. Yes.

TOMPKINS. Oh, Lord!

ROSENBAUM. What is it?

TOMPKINS. Has a mother, hasn't she?

ROSENBAUM. Must have had a father, too. What's the matter with mother?

TOMPKINS. If Mamma Dean is going to be on this job, you won't want a stage manager for this show, you'll want a lion tamer.

[*He goes into his office. SADIE enters.*]

SADIE. Mr. and Mrs. Brinkley calling.

ROSENBAUM. Show 'em in, show 'em in. Come in, Effie.

EFFIE. [*Entering.*] Well, Rosie? [SADIE goes.]

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands.*] Where's Johnny?

EFFIE. Somewhere in the rear. That man's always leaving Buffalo just as I'm pulling into the Grand Central.

JOHNNY. [*Entering.*] Who are you knocking now?

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands.*] Well, well, Johnny!

[*EFFIE BRINKLEY is a plump, pretty, jolly woman of thirty-five, her bleached hair, too youthful hat, and gown, indicating clearly the passé soubrette. Her husband, JOHNNY, a small, spare man in the fifties, has the gloomy manner and dejected appearance that is so often characteristic of the comedian in private life.*]

ROSENBAUM. Here, sit down, sit down.

EFFIE. Didn't I tell you he'd be the same old Rosie?

ROSENBAUM. Why not?

JOHNNY. You're a great manager, now.

ROSENBAUM. Anybody who's had one success is a great manager.

[*EFFIE and JOHNNY sit. ROSENBAUM gets a box of cigars.*]

EFFIE. Johnny didn't want to come.

ROSENBAUM. [*Reproachfully.*] Johnny and you knew me when I——

JOHNNY. I never bank on that "I knew him when" thing.

[*He takes a cigar.*]

EFFIE. The sight of you, Rosie, takes me back to 'Frisco.

JOHNNY. Remember that joint we all lived in?

ROSENBAUM. The House of a Thousand Prunes.

[*They laugh. ROSENBAUM sits at his desk.*]

EFFIE. My, but five years makes a big difference in this business!

ROSENBAUM. Effie, you don't look a day older.

EFFIE. It's my grand new liquid rouge.

JOHNNY. And I just paid three dollars to regild her dome.

ROSENBAUM. How's the world using you?

JOHNNY. We're still among the deserving poor.

ROSENBAUM. Where have you been keeping yourself?

EFFIE. Hiding out in the alfalfa.

ROSENBAUM. You ought to be on Broadway.

JOHNNY. We haven't a look-in. I haven't that sex appeal.

EFFIE. Isn't it funny some New York manager doesn't take a violent fancy to Johnny?

JOHNNY. Hush, Effie, you make me feel like an abandoned woman.

ROSENBAUM. What can I do for you?

EFFIE. Well, a couple of jobs would come in handy.

JOHNNY. Anything in this play you're putting on?

ROSENBAUM. I'll see, Johnny. [*He looks at the "cast sheet" on his desk.*] There's a bit in the last act.

JOHNNY. One of those bad butlers?

ROSENBAUM. No, a chauffeur.

EFFIE. Anything for me? We always go together. He's too darn attractive to leave lying around loose.

ROSENBAUM. There's a housekeeper. But, oh, you couldn't afford to play them.

EFFIE. The only thing an actor can't afford to be is idle.

JOHNNY. We're eating on the last link of my gold watch and chain. What do they pay?

ROSENBAUM. Hold fast.

JOHNNY. [*Clutching his chair.*] Spring it!

ROSENBAUM. Seventy-five dollars for the two of them.

JOHNNY. [*Gasping.*] Air! I want air!

ROSENBAUM. I tell you what: we'll make it a hundred.

[*He presses the buzzer.*]

EFFIE. Now, Rosie, we don't want to work you.

ROSENBAUM. What's money between friends? [SADIE bustles in.] Sadie, make out a contract for Effie and John Brinkley at One Hundred. [To EFFIE.] I'll mail it to you.

SADIE. Mrs. Dean and Miss Dean are waiting to see you.

ROSENBAUM. When I ring, show them in. [SADIE goes.]

EFFIE. Is Betty Dean to be in the company?

ROSENBAUM. I'm figuring on her for the lead. Do you know her?

EFFIE. Know her? Many's the two weeks' notice her mother and I have read off the same call-board. Haven't seen her for years until she turned up this summer.

ROSENBAUM. Can the girl act?

EFFIE. She should if she's anything like her mother, Matilda Kent. You've heard of her. Used to play leading business.

JOHNNY. I thought that Betty was going to marry that young fellow who's been hanging around.

EFFIE. Oh, no; he insists that Betty give up the stage. Matilda gave up a big career to marry. She won't let Betty make the same mistake.

JOHNNY. Jerry is one of the idle rich, but he's a nice kid.

EFFIE. Yes, but when you think of the late Mr. Dean, you can't blame Matilda for being something of a pessimist when it comes to love. She's devoted her life to Betty and she's determined to get her on Broadway.

JOHNNY. Then no man, woman or child will stop her. She's some warrior, is Matilda.

ROSENBAUM. Johnny, you're throwing an awful scare into me.

EFFIE. Don't mind Johnny. He always was an artist with a hammer. I like Matilda. You take Betty. She's a find for some manager. Where are the parts?

ROSENBAUM. Here.

[EFFIE and JOHNNY rise. ROSENBAUM hands a part of two "sides" to EFFIE and another of three "sides" to JOHNNY. They look at them, then at ROSENBAUM, who smiles apologetically.]

EFFIE. All of this?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right, Effie, you can build it up.

EFFIE. Are you engaging me as an actress or an architect?

JOHNNY. Cheer up, Effie; if anyone in the audience winks, they'll miss me.

EFFIE. Where are we rehearsing?

ROSENBAUM. We're using the stage downstairs. You can go out that way.

[He indicates the door at the right of the room.]

EFFIE. Good-bye, Rosie.

[She shakes hands and starts to go.]

JOHNNY. *[Shaking hands.]* Rosie, you've been immense to us.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right.

EFFIE. Come over to see us.

ROSENBAUM. Sure.

JOHNNY. We'll have some prunes.

[JOHNNY and EFFIE leave. ROSENBAUM pushes the buzzer and then, sitting at the desk, assumes a managerial attitude, affecting to be very busy in order to impress MRS. DEAN and BETTY, who are shown in by SADIE. MRS. DEAN is a woman of fifty, shrewd, capable, dominated by one idea only, and that the furthering of her daughter's success on the stage; in a word, the typical "stage mother," the terror of managers and the despair of stage directors. Her nondescript bonnet and her shabby blue serge suit are in striking contrast to the exquisitely charming attire of her daughter, BETTINA, a very pretty girl of twenty, who bows shyly to ROSENBAUM, on whom her mother advances with an air of grim determination.]

ROSENBAUM. *[Rising.]* Good morning, Miss Dean, Mrs. Dean. Sit down, please. *[They sit.]* Well, Miss Dean, are you at liberty to consider an offer?

MRS. DEAN. *[Interposing.]* That depends.

ROSENBAUM. What did you do last season?

BETTY. I played Mary Turner in "Within the Law."

MRS. DEAN. She was the original, in the number 13 company.

BETTY. Oh, I hope it isn't another crook. I'm so sick of crime.

ROSENBAUM. There isn't a crook in the play.

MRS. DEAN. Why, Mr. Rosenbaum, what a daring departure!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, I've got a novelty.

MRS. DEAN. Don't tell me you've found a playwright with a new idea!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, no; everything in it has been done a thousand times, but it's got a new twist and a good religious punch.

MRS. DEAN. [*Complacently.*] Betty was wonderful in "The Christian."

BETTY. What sort of a part is this?

ROSENBAUM. Pathos, comedy, emotion, the whole bunch of tricks. Do you think you can handle it?

MRS. DEAN. Mere child's play for Betty?

BETTY. [*Protesting.*] Oh, Mother!

ROSENBAUM. [*Drily.*] You're not at all prejudiced.

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking press notices from her bag.*] Mr. Rosenbaum, I don't ask you to take a mother's word for her daughter's ability. Listen: [*Reading.*] "The comedy of a Mrs. Fiske, the emotion of a Duse, the grace of a Pavlowa and the charm of an Ethel Barrymore." That's a slight tribute to Betty from the *Oscalooza Eagle*. The *Waco Argus* says—

BETTY. Oh, mother, Mr. Rosenbaum doesn't want to hear my press notices.

[*She rises, embarrassed, and moves away.*]

MRS. DEAN. I'm only trying to prove to Mr. Rosenbaum that you can act circles around any of these Broadway favourites.

ROSENBAUM. Broadway doesn't want acting.

MRS. DEAN. [*Beaming.*] Mr. Rosenbaum, it's a pleasure to meet a manager who knows the New York public.

[*She rises and sits across the desk from ROSENBAUM.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Mrs. Dean, has she any personality?

MRS. DEAN. That, perhaps, is Betty's greatest charm.

ROSENBAUM. Has she any mannerisms? They like them, too.

MRS. DEAN. She's full of mannerisms.

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands across the desk.*] You're a woman after my own heart. What's her salary?

MRS. DEAN. Two hundred dollars a week and her clothes.

[ROSENBAUM *draws his hand away quickly as if stung.*

BETTY, *who has wandered to the other side of the room, turning quickly in surprise, meets the warning look of MRS. DEAN.*

ROSENBAUM. For an unknown actress?

MRS. DEAN. Unknown! I've never noticed your portrait in any Hall of Fame.

ROSENBAUM. I'll give you one hundred dollars.

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] Betty, wasn't that appointment with Mr. Belasco for today?

ROSENBAUM. [*Laughing.*] Belasco! Now we've both had our little joke. Let's talk business; one hundred dollars.

MRS. DEAN. Quite a comedian, aren't you?

ROSENBAUM. I'm sorry. Maybe we can do business some other time. [BETTY *comes toward MRS. DEAN.* ROSENBAUM "*sizes*" *her up.*] Well, what do you say to one hundred and twenty-five? It's a great part.

[MRS. DEAN'S *back is toward ROSIE. She smiles triumphantly at BETTY, then turns to ROSENBAUM with gracious dignity.*

MRS. DEAN. I hope you get someone to play it. Come, Betty.

[*They start to go.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Following them.*] One hundred and fifty, [MRS. DEAN *turns*] but you buy the clothes.

MRS. DEAN. [*Suspiciously.*] Will we come into New York?

ROSENBAUM. Worse plays have.

MRS. DEAN. [*All smiling graciousness.*] Betty, dear, how would you like to work for Mr. Rosenbaum?

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] I'd just as soon.

MRS. DEAN. Well, as Betty feels so strongly about it, I'll take it.

ROSENBAUM. Before I engage her, I'd like to have her read a speech or two.

MRS. DEAN. Certainly.

BETTY. Oh, I couldn't.

ROSENBAUM. I've got to get some idea of what you can do before I sign you up.

MRS. DEAN. It's the nervousness of the artist. She inherits it. I felt exactly the same way when I had to read the Portia speech for dear Mr. Booth. [*With a gesture, reciting.*] "The quality of mercy is not strained."

ROSENBAUM. [*Stopping her.*] It's your daughter I'm engaging.

MRS. DEAN. [*Roguishly.*] Ah, yes, of course. [*She giggles.*] If you give Betty a moment to look it over.

ROSENBAUM. Sure. Take this speech.

[*He hands MRS. DEAN a part and goes into the waiting-room. MRS. DEAN turns joyously to BETTY.*]

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Betty, my darling, you're going to get your chance; you're going to be on Broadway.

BETTY. Maybe I can't play the part.

MRS. DEAN. Matilda Kent's daughter can play anything!

BETTY. But for \$150 he'll expect so much of me.

MRS. DEAN. My dear, the more a manager pays you the better he thinks you are. [*She looks over the part.*] This speech isn't bad, but I'll see that it's rewritten to give you something to get your teeth in.

[*She hands the part to BETTY, then, crossing to the desk, picks up first act of the manuscript of the play.*]

BETTY sits wearily at the left of the room.

BETTY. What's it about?

MRS. DEAN. Never mind what it's about. When you read it, just fix your thoughts on something sad.

BETTY. I'll think of poor, dear Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. [*Drily.*] Yes. Now, about the clothes. [*She looks at the first page of the manuscript.*] Four acts! That means four dresses.

BETTY. How will we get them?

MRS. DEAN. We've got to get them. I'll make them.

BETTY. [*Rising, goes to her.*] Oh, Mother, I'm so tired of seeing you work yourself to death for me. I'm ashamed of going around dressed like this and you so dingy.

[*She puts her head on her mother's shoulder.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Embracing her.*] You just wait, my dear, until you make your big success! Then watch mother flounder around in the lap of luxury.

BETTY. [*Drawing away.*] But we needn't wait. I could give you everything you wanted, if you'd let me marry Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. Now, Betty, you've known Jerry only two months. We won't discuss that infatuation again.

BETTY. It's not infatuation. It's love. And he says I'm "the love of his life."

MRS. DEAN. That's a mossy old line.

BETTY. It sounds convincing the way he says it.

[*She moves away.*

MRS. DEAN. It sounded convincing when your father said it. [*She goes to BETTY.*] Oh, Betty, I've nothing against Jerry, but when I was your age I was swept off my feet just like this. I don't want you to make my mistake. All I ask of you is to wait until you've had a taste of success; then, if you want to give it up, that will be a horse of another colour. Now, where's that speech? [*She takes the part.*] See, Betty, tears in your voice there, look wistfully here, make your lips quiver. Trick it.

BETTY. Oh, I'm sick of the tricks of the trade. I don't want to act.

[She throws the part on the table.]

MRS. DEAN. *[Reproachfully.]* If you felt all this about the stage, why didn't you tell me? You knew I was only living for the day to see you take a curtain call on Broadway, living only for that one thrill of mother's pride. I've never forced you to do anything you didn't want to do, and I won't now. You're free to make your choice.

BETTY. *[Turning to her.]* I'm not free to make my choice. *[She throws her arms around her mother.]* I love you. You know I do. No girl ever had a better mother. Do you think I want to disappoint you? But I love Jerry, too. Oh, what can I do?

[She is at the point of tears, MRS. DEAN at her wits' end, when they are interrupted by the return of ROSENBAUM with the contracts.]

ROSENBAUM. Well, are you ready? Are you set?

MRS. DEAN. *[Bewildered.]* Why — Mr. Rosenbaum—
I—

[BETTY turns, sees the disappointment in her mother's eyes, then, sighing, picks up the part, takes a few steps toward ROSENBAUM, who is seated at the desk, and begins to read, her mother watching anxiously the effect on him.]

BETTY. *[Reading.]* "I've been lonely, too, Mr. Craig—lonelier than you, for you've had your son, and for years I've had no one who really belonged to me. I've tried to forget that loneliness with the thought that some day this wandering would be over, that some day I'd have a home, a husband, and now you want to take the man I love away from me."

[The concluding lines are so applicable to her own situation that she is overcome and, throwing herself into the chair, buries her head in her arms and breaks into wild sobs. MRS. DEAN, understanding, goes to her quickly, but ROSENBAUM, thinking it a bit of

acting, jumps to his feet excitedly and claps his hands in applause.

ROSENBAUM. Great! Great! You've got the sob stuff all right. Here's your contract; one hundred and fifty dollars.

[He holds out the pen to BETTY, who continues to cry.

MRS. DEAN is torn between her joy at the offer and her fear that BETTY will refuse it. There is a pause.

ROSENBAUM looks at them bewildered.

Aren't you going to sign it?

MRS. DEAN. Why, I don't know.

ROSENBAUM. Here you are, Miss Dean.

[BETTY looks at her mother, who is watching her with tears in her eyes. BETTY braces up, walks across to the chair, sits at the desk and takes a pen. MRS. DEAN gives a sigh of relief, goes to the table and gets the part.

ROSENBAUM. Hadn't you better read the contracts?

BETTY. *[Signing them.]* They're all alike. If you want me you'll keep me.

MRS. DEAN. Yes. It was a wise man who said that a theatrical contract was an evidence of mutual distrust.

[BETTY gives one contract to her mother, who looks it over, verifies it, then folds it and puts it in her bag.

BETTY. Where is the rehearsal?

ROSENBAUM. Downstairs—this way.

[He opens the door that leads to the stage. BETTY starts to go, but MRS. DEAN, victorious, resumes her aggressive mood. TOMPKINS comes in, unobserved.

MRS. DEAN. I suppose your stage manager is the usual fiend in human form.

ROSENBAUM. *[Turning, sees TOMPKINS.]* Here he is. Mrs. Dean, Miss Dean, Mr. Tompkins. I think you'll find him amiable.

MRS. DEAN. We shall see.

[She looks at TOMPKINS coldly, then strides haughtily

to the door. BETTY smiles shyly at them as she follows her mother out of the room.

ROSENBAUM. [*Excitedly.*] Well, what do you think about the little lady?

TOMPKINS. I'm not worrying about the little lady; it's the old lady who's got me winging.

[SADIE enters, wearing a large bunch of violets.

SADIE. Here are the Brinkley contracts.

TOMPKINS. Rosie, come out and take a flash at these scene models.

ROSENBAUM. What's wrong?

TOMPKINS. Everything!

[*He slams into his office.*

ROSENBAUM. Sadie, I'd rather have a thousand dollars than that man's disposition.

[*He wearily follows TOMPKINS. SADIE places the BRINKLEY contracts on the desk and is about to return to the outer office when JEROME BELDEN rushes in.*

JERRY. I missed her! Has she been here?

SADIE. Yes.

JERRY. Has Mr. Rosenbaum seen her?

SADIE. Yes.

JERRY. Where is she?

SADIE. I think she's downstairs, rehearsing.

JERRY. He's engaged her?

SADIE. I'm afraid so.

JERRY. Then I've got to see Mr. Rosenbaum. Where is he?

SADIE. He's busy.

JERRY. Very well. I'll wait.

[SADIE goes. JERRY is sitting at the desk when TOMPKINS, coming in, sees him, stops and clutches ROSENBAUM, who is following him.

TOMPKINS. [*In a hoarse whisper.*] Look! For the man about town. Pay him anything. He's it. Heaven has heard my prayer.

ROSENBAUM. God's good to His chosen.

[*He runs over past JERRY to his chair at the desk.*

TOMPKINS brings a chair and places it so as to block the way should JERRY try to leave. JERRY, seeing them, rises.

JERRY. Mr. Rosenbaum?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, yes. [JERRY offers his card. ROSENBAUM takes it.] Well, young man, do you sing?

JERRY. [*Bewildered.*] A little. Why?

ROSENBAUM. What's your voice?

JERRY. [*More bewildered.*] Why—I don't know.

TOMPKINS. That's all right. He can talk the song.

ROSENBAUM. Do you tango?

JERRY. A little, but isn't it——

TOMPKINS. That's all right; he can fake it. How about the uniform?

ROSENBAUM. Stand up, please.

JERRY. [*Rising.*] Really——

ROSENBAUM. He can let down the pants. Can you act at all?

JERRY. No.

TOMPKINS. I'm glad you realise it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Pushes buzzer.*] All right, Mr. Belden. I'll give you seventy-five dollars a week. [SADIE enters. ROSENBAUM gives her JERRY's card.] Here, Sadie, make out a contract for seventy-five dollars. Come back this afternoon. Take him, Tompkins.

[*He rises. TOMPKINS advances, seizes JERRY by the arm, and is starting to drag him toward the door to the stage when JERRY throws him off.*

JERRY. Wait a minute. Damn it, I tell you I'm not an actor.

TOMPKINS. Didn't you come here about a part?

JERRY. No. I came here to see him on business.

ROSENBAUM. Well, why didn't you say so?

JERRY. I didn't get a chance.

TOMPKINS. [*Bitterly.*] Everybody's hand's against me.

[To ROSIE.] Send up to the Winter Garden and get me one of those men about town.

[*He goes into his office. SADIE bursts into laughter, which ROSENBAUM resents.*

ROSENBAUM. Sadie, no laughing in business hours. [SADIE goes.] What do you want to see me about?

JERRY. A matter of business.

ROSENBAUM. Are you an architect?

JERRY. No.

ROSENBAUM. Someone's always trying to wish a New York theatre on me. What is it?

JERRY. [*Threateningly.*] You're coming between me and the woman I love.

ROSENBAUM. What? Who is she?

JERRY. Bettina Dean.

ROSENBAUM. [*Frightened.*] I've only seen the woman twice.

JERRY. That was enough.

ROSENBAUM. I didn't say half a dozen words to her.

[*JERRY comes toward the desk. A chair is in his way; he throws it aside violently and leans over the desk, his doubled fist within an inch of ROSENBAUM'S nose.*

ROSENBAUM is terrified.

JERRY. You're deliberately ruining her life's happiness.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising indignantly.*] It isn't so. Her mother was in this office all the time.

JERRY. Oh, I don't mean that.

[*He turns away.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, what in blazes do you mean? Talking of life's happiness and women you love like a—like a problem play.

JERRY. You thought I meant that she was in love with you? [*He laughs.*] With you? [*He laughs.*] That's funny. She wouldn't look at *you*.

ROSENBAUM. Is that so! See these grey hairs? That's what I get for being fascinating to women.

[ROSENBAUM *sits at the right of the desk.* JERRY *brings a chair and sits across from him.*

JERRY. Betty 'phoned me this morning. Said you'd sent for her. Now what do you want to butt in like a fat-head—

ROSENBAUM. One of us is nutty!

JERRY. Betty says this means good-bye.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] Come on; let's you and me go up to Matteawan.

JERRY. [*Rising.*] No, sit down.

[*He tries to push ROSENBAUM into the chair.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Placing both hands on JERRY'S arms.*] Just a minute. Give me a chance to duck when you throw it.

JERRY. Throw what?

ROSENBAUM. The bomb.

JERRY. Sit down. I haven't any bomb. Let's talk money.

[*He sits.*

ROSENBAUM. Money? He's got a lucid interval. Have you got money?

JERRY. Lots of it.

ROSENBAUM. Excuse me a minute. [*He rushes up to the door, opens it and calls.*] Sadie!

SADIE. [*Outside.*] What?

ROSENBAUM. Go to lunch.

SADIE. [*Outside.*] All right!

[ROSENBAUM *stands for an instant, looking at JERRY speculatively, then, smiling, brings a chair and places it beside him.*

JERRY. Now, I don't know anything about this theatrical business.

ROSENBAUM. Don't let that stop you from going into it. There's a mint in it for the right fellow.

JERRY. I don't want to go into it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Disappointed.*] Oh!

[*He sits.*

JERRY. Now I want to fix up a deal with you. How much do you want? Write your own ticket.

ROSENBAUM. Come on; we'll begin all over again. [*They rise. ROSENBAUM takes JERRY's hand, shakes it effusively.*] How do you do, Mr. Belden?

JERRY. How do you do, Mr. Rosenbaum? Oh, sit down! [*They sit.*]

ROSENBAUM. Now, there's you and Miss Dean and me and a deal and some money you want to force on me.

JERRY. I want to marry Bettina Dean.

ROSENBAUM. If you want to commit suicide, I'm not stopping you.

JERRY. Why? Haven't you engaged her?

ROSENBAUM. Sure! She's signed the contract.

JERRY. [*Dejectedly.*] That settles it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Surprised.*] How?

JERRY. We could have been married if you hadn't given her this engagement. I wanted her to give up the stage. Betty is willing, but Mrs. Dean won't hear of it until Betty's had her chance in New York. We've promised to wait. Now, what'll you take to fire her?

ROSENBAUM. What good will that do?

JERRY. We can get married. Don't you see, no other New York manager wants her.

ROSENBAUM. My God, have I got a lemon and a lion tamer?

[*He rises.*]

JERRY. [*Following him.*] Oh, Betty can act, all right.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, can she? Well, you can get a wife anywhere, but where'll I get a leading woman?

JERRY. You've never been crazy about a girl.

ROSENBAUM. Worse than that! I've married 'em—three of 'em. One was a leading woman, one was a heavy woman, and one was an ongenoo. She was the business woman. She gets alimony.

JERRY. No use appealing to you for sympathy. You're soured on married life.

ROSENBAUM. Not at all. You've got my sympathy. I know what it is. These ongenooos do get you.

JERRY. This one has got me, you bet.

[ROSENBAUM and JERRY are standing side by side, lost in thought. ROSENBAUM looks at him sympathetically.]

ROSENBAUM. Honest, if I'd known, I'd have been tempted to help you. [He pauses as if struck with an idea.] Look here, have you ever acted?

JERRY. I've fluffed around in college plays.

ROSENBAUM. Why don't you take this part of the man about town. I'll give you *thirty* dollars a week.

JERRY. That won't be necessary.

ROSENBAUM. Well, come on and take it.

JERRY. I couldn't act.

ROSENBAUM. Anybody can act. You'd be in the company with Miss Dean, see her every day, dance a tango with her every night.

JERRY. I couldn't go on the stage. My friends would josh the life out of me.

[Their argument is interrupted by the entrance of MRS. DEAN, followed by BETTY.]

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum, that man Tompkins is simply impossible. He—— [She sees JERRY.] What are you doing here?

JERRY. I came to buy Betty's contract.

MRS. DEAN. What?

JERRY. I don't want her to go on the road. I hate traveling.

MRS. DEAN. It's too bad about you. It isn't necessary for you to travel.

JERRY. Oh, yes, it is! I've got to see Betty.

MRS. DEAN. Do you think I'd allow you to trapse around the country after my daughter? Travel on the same train, stop at the same hotel? Do you think I'm going to have Betty compromised by the attentions of an idle rich young man?

JERRY. Compromised? That's so. [To ROSENBAUM.] Say, what do you do to go on the stage?

ROSENBAUM. Just go. -

JERRY. I'll take that part.

ROSENBAUM. [Quickly.] Twenty a week?

[JERRY and ROSENBAUM shake hands on the bargain, to the astonishment of MRS. DEAN and to the joy of BETTY, who runs across to JERRY'S outstretched arms.]

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The parlour of the Palace Hotel, Punxatawney—a large room with the dingy aspect and notable lack of comfort so characteristic of the “one-night stand” hotels in America. At the right of the room is a large window with “stringy” lace curtains over which are faded green rep hangings, at the left a fireplace and, towering above it, a black walnut mantel cluttered with garishly coloured bric-à-brac, and at the back and to the left a large opening, showing a hall and a flight of stairs. A round table with a spotted chenille cover stands in the centre of the room with chairs at the right, at the left and at the back of it, all of them of different periods, alike in that they are equally uncomfortable. A rocking-chair at the fireplace, a horsehair sofa at the right of the room, and, near the window, a table on which, in a glass case, is a moth-eaten stuffed bird, complete the furnishings of the room. The wall-paper in an intricate design of green and purple “cabbages,” and fly-specked engravings of historical incidents, preferably those depicting death, enhance the general gloom which is intensified rather than mitigated by the light of a ponderous chandelier. It is half-past eleven of an evening in October, six weeks having elapsed since the events of the preceding act,

ROSENBAUM, *his hat pushed down over his forehead, a partially smoked cigar hanging from the corner of his mouth, his hands in his pockets, slouches in the chair at the right of the table, a picture of utter and abandoned despondency. The NIGHT CLERK, a tall, raw-boned Yankee with hair plastered in deep curves on*

his brow, a heavy, drooping moustache, and dressed in the height of small-town fashion, "featuring" a plaid waistcoat and a made-up four-in-hand tie in which is a cluster scarf-pin of imitation emeralds and diamonds, enters and approaches ROSENBAUM, who turns and regards him gloomily.

ROSENBAUM. Well, Mr. Night Clerk?

NIGHT CLERK. Can't find a room. House is chock-a-block. Got two drummers sleepin' on the billiard-table and four old ladies in the bridal soot.

ROSENBAUM. Glad somebody's selling out. What's the attraction?

NIGHT CLERK. This is Old Home Week in Punxatawney.

ROSENBAUM. Any other hotels?

NIGHT CLERK. Everythin's full but the jail. Guess from the carryin's on tonight, it'll be full tomorrow.

ROSENBAUM. What about that drummer who is going out?

NIGHT CLERK. He ain't fit to go on the midnight. He took in a couple of acts of that show, "The Wallop," at the Opera House, and ever since he's been drinkin' somethin' terrible.

ROSENBAUM. Where is he? I'll join him. [*He rises.* TOMPKINS enters.] Hello, Tompkins.

NIGHT CLERK. Will I fix a cot in here?

TOMPKINS. [*To ROSENBAUM.*] Can't you get a room?

ROSENBAUM. No, the hotel has a hit.

TOMPKINS. Go over and take mine.

ROSENBAUM. I'll take a chance on the cot.

[*He sits.*

TOMPKINS. You'll never sleep.

[*He sits on the other side of the table.*

ROSENBAUM. Yes, I will. I've got some plays to read.

NIGHT CLERK. Want anythin' else?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, a lot of poison.

NIGHT CLERK. [*Smiling.*] Rye or Scotch?

ROSENBAUM. Bring us a couple of slugs out of that drummer's bottle.

[*The NIGHT CLERK goes.*

TOMPKINS. I didn't know you were in front tonight. When did you get here?

ROSENBAUM. 7:30. I went straight to the theatre.

TOMPKINS. Well, what do you think of the show?

ROSENBAUM. I hate to tell you.

TOMPKINS. As bad as that?

ROSENBAUM. Worse.

TOMPKINS. Is it the performance?

ROSENBAUM. No. As the saying goes, "You put it over, but it lay there and it died."

TOMPKINS. You saw it with a cold house.

ROSENBAUM. We've had three weeks of cold houses.

TOMPKINS. You got my letter about young Belden? You've got to let him go if you're going to take this show into New York.

ROSENBAUM. I'm taking it into New York—to Cain's storehouse.

TOMPKINS. Then we blow up?

ROSENBAUM. Tomorrow night.

TOMPKINS. [*Laughing bitterly.*] I picked it for a flivver.

ROSENBAUM. You were a good picker.

TOMPKINS. Well, why did you produce it?

ROSENBAUM. I wanted to do something for art.

TOMPKINS. Seems to me the minute you managers collect a little loose change providing entertainment for the tired business man, you go bugged producing something for the highbrows.

ROSENBAUM. I'm cured. A small cast and one set of scenery: that's going to be my idea of art.

TOMPKINS. [*Picking up the manuscript.*] Is this it? [*Reading the title.*] "A Drop of Poison!"

ROSENBAUM. No, that's worse than "The Wallop." Give it to me. I'll bury it.

[*He rises, takes the manuscript and puts in his travel-*

ling bag which is on the sofa. The NIGHT CLERK returns with a tray containing the drinks.

NIGHT CLERK. Here you are, gentlemen. [ROSENBAUM pays for the drinks.] Thank you, Mr. Tompkins, for them passes. "The Wallop" is some show!

ROSENBAUM. Did you like it?

[He sits again.]

NIGHT CLERK. Immense.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, give it to him.

TOMPKINS. No; he may have a wife and family.

NIGHT CLERK. Of course, I don't set up to know much about shows. But you take it from me——

ROSENBAUM. He wants to give it back to us.

[TOMPKINS and ROSIE drink.]

NIGHT CLERK. Maybe you don't want me to say what I think?

TOMPKINS. What you think is going to make a whole lot of difference to us.

NIGHT CLERK. Your first act's punk.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, make a note of that.

NIGHT CLERK. And I don't like your leadin' man.

TOMPKINS. Shake, brother, shake!

[He rises, grabs the NIGHT CLERK's hand and shakes it, then sits again.]

NIGHT CLERK. The audience would a liked it better if there was more to laugh at.

ROSENBAUM. Bring 'em around and let 'em look at me.

NIGHT CLERK. There's a lot of other things I can't think of just this minute.

TOMPKINS. *[Imploringly.]* Try! Won't you?

ROSENBAUM. But don't give yourself a headache.

NIGHT CLERK. Oh, pshaw, thinkin' don't bother me. I'm used to it. Always help all the managers fix up their shows.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, he's a lovely fellow. If it won't interrupt you, bring up some sandwiches and some beer.

NIGHT CLERK. How many of you's going to celebrate?

ROSENBAUM. There'll be six pallbearers.

NIGHT CLERK. Ain't you show folks the kidders?

[*Chuckling, he goes.*]

TOMPKINS. Going to break the sad blow to the bunch tonight?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. I left word for Effie and Johnnie, the Deans and young Belden to see me here. I didn't want to break it to Mrs. Dean alone.

TOMPKINS. Well, Mathilda's going to emit a yell that would make the roar of a Bengal tiger sound like the voice of a cooing dove.

ROSENBAUM. If she assaults me I have witnesses. You'll join us?

TOMPKINS. [*Rising.*] I've got to go back to the show shop. See that the scenery gets out. Want me to tell the working staff?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. I'll tell the rest of the company. Where'll I find them?

[*He rises.*]

TOMPKINS. Across the street at the cheap hotel.

[*He goes. ROSENBAUM is following him dejectedly when BETTY appears in street attire. She shakes hands with ROSENBAUM.*]

BETTY. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Rosenbaum. Do you want to see me?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. Where is your mother?

BETTY. She stopped at the telegraph office.

ROSENBAUM. Will you wait here? I'll be right back.

BETTY. Certainly.

[*As she moves towards the fireplace, JERRY enters breezily.*]

JERRY. Well, Rosie, how do you feel?

ROSENBAUM. Like someone pushed me off the Singer Building.

[*He goes. JERRY, laughing, follows him to the door, looks out to see that no one is coming, then rushes to BETTY, grabs her and kisses her.*]

BETTY. Jerry!

JERRY. It's the first chance I've had in six weeks, and I may not get another, so I'll take a few more now before mother gets on the job again.

[He kisses her again.]

BETTY. Poor old Jerry! To be near his Betty did he have to be an actor?

JERRY. This consoles me.

[He tries to kiss her again. BETTY evades him and moves away.]

BETTY. You won't have to be one much longer

JERRY. *[Following her.]* What do you mean?

BETTY. We're going to close.

JERRY. Close what?

BETTY. The play's a failure.

JERRY. Who told you?

BETTY. No one. I know the symptoms. Mother will be furious.

JERRY. Going back to New York! Great! Come on now, hip-hip—

BETTY. I haven't a "hip-hip" in me. Oh, I wish this beastly play had gone to New York and failed, satisfied mother and set me free.

JERRY. Free! Won't you marry me now?

BETTY. No, I can't go back on my promise to mother. I said I'd wait until I had my chance on Broadway. It will be a case of look for another engagement.

[She sinks wearily onto the sofa.]

JERRY. What! Me have to act again?

[He falls into a chair.]

BETTY. I'm afraid you wouldn't get the chance, dear. Not if they saw you.

JERRY. Have I made this tour of darkest America, endured all the horrors of those one-night-stands, no decent beds, food that's a crime, all that for nothing?

BETTY. I didn't ask you to do it.

JERRY. You might have told me I wasn't going to have

a minute alone with you. Can't sit in the same seat with you on the train, can't go for a walk, can't sit at the same table, can't even carry your grip for fear of compromising you.

BETTY. I'm not responsible for the etiquette of this profession.

JERRY. Can't even see you at the theatre. The only minute I get with you is dancing that darn tango, and they won't let us take an encore on that.

BETTY. I'm not running the performance.

JERRY. Have to stand around and see that goggle-eyed leading man mauling you all over the stage. [*He rises and goes to her.*] One thing I'll do before we close. I'll take a punch at him.

BETTY. And how do you think I like it?

JERRY. Well, you act as though you enjoyed it.

[*He walks away, sulkily.*]

BETTY. [*Rising.*] Enjoy it! I've had a lovely time on this trip. It's so comfortable to play a love scene with you in one entrance glaring at me if I play it well and mother in another entrance glaring at me if I don't.

JERRY. I suppose I am a little jealous.

BETTY. A little? You're full of it.

JERRY. [*Going to her.*] Don't you understand? Betty, don't you love me?

BETTY. I don't love anybody, I just want to get married.

[*She turns to JERRY, and puts her head on his shoulder.*]

JERRY. [*Putting his arms around her.*] Come on, let's find a minister.

BETTY. I've just told you I've got to wait till mother gets me on Broadway. [*Disgustedly.*] Broadway! When all I want is a farm and chickens and a little calf.

JERRY. I've only twenty thousand dollars a year, Betty, but I guess we could run a little farm on that. If you ever do give up the stage, you won't want to act again.

BETTY. Every wife has to act a little.

[She kisses him. The NIGHT CLERK enters with a tray on which are beer and sandwiches. They jump apart.]

JERRY. *[Embarrassed.]* We—we were rehearsing.

NIGHT CLERK. Oh, don't mind me. I ain't no scandal monger.

[He puts the tray on the table.]

[Enter EFFIE and JOHNNY in rather dingy attire.]

EFFIE. Hello children. Where's Mr. Rosenbaum?

NIGHT CLERK. He said not to wait. You can wade right in.

[He goes.]

JERRY. Shall I open these now?

[He indicates the bottles.]

JOHNNY. I'll never have a worse thirst.

[JERRY sits at the right of the table opening a bottle of beer; BETTY takes a sandwich and sits on the couch. EFFIE sits at the left of the table and begins to munch sandwiches. JOHNNY goes over to the fireplace.]

EFFIE. Why the feast?

JOHNNY. I hate to be the one to spread the pall over this merry gathering, but it looks to me like a two weeks' notice in disguise.

BETTY. Me too!

JERRY. What makes you think we close?

JOHNNY. My boy, a bad play playing to worse business, and a sudden visit from the manager—well, when you've been in the business as long as I have, you'll be able to put that two and two together without straining your psychic powers.

EFFIE. I've been expecting it. We opened on Friday the 13th.

JOHNNY. There was a peacock on that garden drop.

BETTY. I always hated that business of my opening an umbrella.

JERRY. I didn't know that actors were superstitious.

BETTY. We're not.

JOHNNY. Somebody's been stringing you.

JERRY. Well, thank the Lord, no more dressing in the flies for me.

JOHNNY. It's so long since I dressed anywhere else. That's one of the beauties of this profession, the older you grow the more stairs you climb.

JERRY. Cheer up, Johnny, we only live once.

JOHNNY. And if you're an actor you only live half the time.

EFFIE. [*Tearfully.*] Oh, what will we do?

JOHNNY. Oh, why worry, when you can be buried for twenty-five dollars?

EFFIE. Oh, Johnny, don't.

[*She begins to cry. JOHNNY goes to her quickly and puts his arms about her.*]

JOHNNY. Oh, Effie, old girl——

EFFIE. What would happen to me, if anything happened to you? Life's hard enough together. Oh, curse this business!

JERRY. It's a dog's life.

BETTY. [*Rising and going to JERRY.*] Oh, no, all a dog has to do is lie around and get fat. We don't dare do that.

JOHNNY. Got to begin all over again. The heart-breaking hunt for a job! If you get it, rehearse for weeks with nothing coming in, and your last bit of savings going out for wardrobe. Then the suspense! Will it go? Will it fail? It's tough enough when you're young, but it's a hell of a trade when you're old.

BETTY. [*Tenderly.*] Not when you grow old together, Johnny. That's all we ask, isn't it, Jerry?

[*She puts her hand on JERRY'S shoulder; JERRY pats it and kisses it.*]

JOHNNY. Jerry's different. I had no right to marry Effie when I couldn't support her.

EFFIE. A lot you had to say about it. I saw that you were my happiness and I grabbed you.

JOHNNY. [*Very tenderly.*] You've never regretted it, have you?

EFFIE. Sometimes when you row about the breakfast coffee.

JOHNNY. Stung!

[*He sits at the back of the table.*]

JERRY. Have some beer, Mrs. Brinkley?

EFFIE. What do you think, Johnny? You know how I take on weight.

JOHNNY. [*Handing her a glass of beer.*] Aw, go on! The more there is of you, the more I love you.

EFFIE. Johnny, I think you're the nicest husband in the world.

JOHNNY. Effie, if I told you what I think about you it would sound like Romeo at his frothiest.

EFFIE. [*Giggling.*] Aren't we a couple of old sillies?

BETTY. We think you're a couple of old dears, don't we, Jerry?

JERRY. Are you going to stick to me like that?

BETTY. If you're as nice as Johnny.

EFFIE. Hush, Betty, he'll get so puffed up, there'll be no living with him.

[*BETTY laughs and moves to the couch. JERRY follows her. ROSENBAUM appears. JOHNNY, EFFIE and BETTY knowing what is coming, settle themselves for the blow which ROSENBAUM hates to deliver. He hesitates, coughs and then begins.*]

ROSENBAUM. Well, children, in this business, we've got to be good gamblers. This is a very painful moment.
I—

JERRY. Oh, they all know you're going to close.

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, let him read his speech.

ROSENBAUM. What's the use? He stole my climax. I'm sorry, people. You've all worked hard to help me put "The Wallop" over. If the show had a ghost of a chance,

I'd stick. But you've seen the business. After I give you two weeks' salary and get you home, I won't be able to pay the first installment on a two cent stamp.

BETTY. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum, I'm so sorry.

[She goes to him and gives him her hand.]

JERRY. Me too. If I can help you out, old man.

EFFIE. Oh, Rosie, are you broke?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right. I didn't have money long enough to get intimate with it.

[He sits at the right of the table. BETTY returns to the couch beside JERRY.]

JERRY. It always struck me that the only *wallop* in the show was in the title.

EFFIE. Of course, if there had been more of Johnny and me in the piece. But our scene in the last act came too late to save it.

JOHNNY. Yes, and when I showed the author where he could slide us in here and there, he handed me a lot of junk about "construction." The poor nut!

EFFIE. *[Indignantly.]* Yes, and instead of thanking you, you'd have thought Johnny was trying to tamper with his deathless English prose.

ROSENBAUM. He doesn't know that plays may be written but that successes are rewritten.

JOHNNY. Yes, by actors.

[ROSIE turns and looks at JOHNNY. EFFIE nods an assent to the statement.]

BETTY. He was awfully nice to me.

JERRY. Why not? You were the best thing in his play.

EFFIE. Rosie, what'll you do?

ROSENBAUM. I guess I'll tackle the ten cent movies. If I can't be the Erlanger of the drama, I'll be the Woolworth.

JOHNNY. We might try the movies, Effie.

EFFIE. Why, Johnny, I can't fall off the Brooklyn Bridge at my time of life, at least, not gracefully.

[MRS. DEAN *appears, unobserved, in the door dressed as in the previous act.*

MRS. DEAN. Good evening, everybody. There you are, Betty. It's bedtime for my little girl.

[JERRY, *at the sound of her voice, jumps quickly from the sofa where he has been seated, his arm around BETTY, who rises in confusion and goes to MRS. DEAN. The others are surprised at MRS. DEAN's cheerful mood.*

EFFIE. [*Whispering across the table to ROSENBAUM.*] Have you broken the news to Mathilda?

[ROSENBAUM *shakes his head.*

JOHNNY. [*Whispering.*] Go on. Get it over.

[ROSENBAUM *rises, fearing the task ahead of him, and walks slowly towards the fireplace. JOHNNY and EFFIE wait for the explosion from MRS. DEAN.*

ROSENBAUM. Oh, Mrs. Dean.

MRS. DEAN. [*Joining him.*] Yes, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. [*Beginning his set speech.*] In this business we've got to be good gamblers. This is a very painful moment. I—

MRS. DEAN. Yes, we close.

ROSENBAUM. [*Greatly surprised.*] You knew?

MRS. DEAN. [*Very pleasantly.*] Yes. It's too bad. We've been such a happy family.

JOHNNY. Yes, just like a Zoo.

[MRS. DEAN *glares over her shoulder at JOHNNY.*

EFFIE *reproves JOHNNY with a glance.*

ROSENBAUM. I've fallen down on my promise to take your daughter into New York.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, I understand perfectly, Mr. Rosenbaum. It's hard enough to get New Yorkers in to see a good play. You can't drive them in to a bad one, unless you send a taxicab with every pass.

[ROSENBAUM, *bewildered, looks at JOHNNY and EFFIE who are equally taken aback, then sits again at the right of the table.*

BETTY. [*Going to her mother.*] Oh, mother, I thought you'd be annoyed.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, my dear, to have been associated with a failure on Broadway, would have been death to your career.

JERRY. What do you mean?

MRS. DEAN. You'll all be so glad to know that Betty's future is assured.

JERRY. Do you mean——?

BETTY. Oh, mother, am I going to be married?

MRS. DEAN. [*Firmly.*] No. [*Beamingly.*] You're going with Belasco.

JERRY. Belasco!

BETTY. What!

MRS. DEAN. Yes, I just sent a wire accepting a part in a new production. To be sure it's only a bit, but better a bit on Broadway than a great part in Punxatawney. Good night everybody. Come, Betty.

[*She and BETTY start to go. JERRY follows them to the door.*]

JERRY. Betty!

[*MRS. DEAN glares at JERRY and leads BETTY away.*]

[*JERRY moves slowly down to the fireplace where he stands the picture of dejection. The others look at him in sympathy.*]

JOHNNY. Isn't she the fox? She felt this coming and laid her pipes.

EFFIE. [*Rising.*] She's right to think of her girl. I wish she would think a little more of you, boy. [*She goes to JERRY and puts her hand in his.*] Good night. Don't worry. God bless you. I've handed that line across so often, but this time no stage manager could say I didn't have real feeling back of it.

JERRY. And it never landed harder.

[*Moved, he puts his arm around EFFIE, who is crying, and takes her to the door. JOHNNY joins*]

them and puts his arm about JERRY'S shoulder in a sympathetic hug.

JOHNNY. Good night, son. Take my advice, go out and put some vine leaves in your hair.

[They go, leaving JERRY standing at the door lost in thought. He is seized suddenly by an idea and runs quickly to ROSENBAUM who is seated, a prey to despondency.]

JERRY. Rosie, do you want to make some easy money?

ROSENBAUM. [Startled.] Where is it? Who's got it?

JERRY. I have. I want you to put on a play for me.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, no, Jerry. I'm too fond of you.

JERRY. Then you'll do this for me. I'll guarantee all expenses.

ROSENBAUM. Pinch me! Pinch me!

JERRY. You get the play and star Betty on Broadway. Are you on?

ROSENBAUM. [Turning to JERRY.] Wait a minute. Isn't there a kick in this?

JERRY. No, and what's more, I'll give you \$5,000 cash for yourself if——

ROSENBAUM. [Disgustedly.] If! Always there's an "if." Sometimes I think it's my middle name.

JERRY. Five thousand dollars, Rosie, if you'll guarantee me a—sure fire failure!

ROSENBAUM. He's got his brain turned.

JERRY. Never saner in my life. Didn't you hear Betty's mother say a moment ago that to be associated with a failure would be death to Betty's career? Well, all I want to do is to cover up that career with a couple of "Rests in Peace" and a nice big "Gates Ajar."

ROSENBAUM. I don't get you.

[He rises, dazed, and goes to JERRY.]

JERRY. Betty's promised her mother that she won't marry me until she's had a chance on Broadway. We furnish the chance. A failure for mother would mean wedding bells for Betty and me. Now do you get me?

ROSENBAUM. [*Eagerly.*] If you want a failure, why not buy "The Wallop"?

JERRY. Oh, no, mother's on to that, and Betty's part's not big enough. Come on, we've got to cinch this thing tonight. I want quick action.

ROSENBAUM. You got the play?

JERRY. No. You've got to get it. You've got to work for that money.

ROSENBAUM. I don't believe I'd know how to pick a failure.

JERRY. [*Laughing.*] Kind regards to "The Wallop."

ROSENBAUM. Suppose Mrs. Dean won't fall for it?

JERRY. All you got to do with Mrs. Dean is to murmur the word "Star." I'll send for her.

[*He presses the push button.*]

ROSENBAUM. But we haven't a play.

JERRY. None kicking around any place?

ROSENBAUM. [*Recollecting.*] Sure, I got a grip full of 'em.

[*He gets his travelling bag, places it on a chair beside the table, opens it and begins to lay the manuscripts on the table. The NIGHT CLERK enters.*]

JERRY. Will you go up to Mrs. Dean's room and tell her Mr. Rosenbaum would like to see her here immediately?

NIGHT CLERK. [*Demurring.*] It's pretty late.

JERRY. That won't make any difference.

[*He gives him a liberal tip.*]

NIGHT CLERK. Well, if you insist. I hope being actresses they won't get the idea that I'm tryin' to make improper advances.

JERRY. Oh, you get out! [*He goes.*] Here, Rosie, spread 'em out. Now pick one!

ROSENBAUM. What?

JERRY. Here, I'll show you. Go it blind.

[*He stands at the back of the table on which the manuscripts are now spread out. He puts his hand over his eyes. ROSENBAUM looks at him and chuckles.*]

ROSENBAUM. By Jiminy, it's as good a way to pick 'em as any.

JERRY. Eeny, meeny, miney, mo. [*On "mo" he grabs a manuscript.*] There you are. [*He picks it up and reads the title "A Drop of Poison."* ROSIE roars with laughter. JERRY is bewildered.] What is it? Is it a comedy?

ROSENBAUM It's a freak.

JERRY. Have you read it?

ROSENBAUM. [*Taking it.*] Some of it. Listen to the note in red ink. [*Reads.*] "NOTE: The last act—[*he roars*] the last act takes place—[*he roars again*] the last act takes place eight years before the opening of the FIRST."

JERRY. It listens like a sure fire flivver.

[*JERRY and ROSENBAUM are hanging on to each other weak from laughter when the NIGHT CLERK returns.*

NIGHT CLERK. Mrs. Dean will be right down.

JERRY. [*To ROSIE.*] "A Drop of Poison."

[*They both laugh.*

NIGHT CLERK. She asks you to excuse her kimony.

JERRY. Kimony!

[*They howl with laughter again, to the intense annoyance of the NIGHT CLERK, who goes.*

JERRY. I'll get out and let you handle it.

ROSENBAUM. All right. When I ring you'll know it's settled. I'll set the stage.

JERRY. And say, I'm not in on this.

ROSENBAUM. Don't you want to be in the company?

JERRY. I should say not. I'm fed up on this acting game. "A Drop of Poison."

[*He laughs and disappears.*

[*ROSENBAUM has hastily put the other manuscripts in the bag which he conceals underneath the table. Then sitting, he takes out his pocket handkerchief and opening the script of "A Drop of Poison" at random, waits for the arrival of MRS. DEAN. Presently there is a knock. ROSENBAUM is convulsed*

with silent laughter, as he pretends to be engrossed in the play. MRS. DEAN knocks again. Then she enters, attired in a faded pink kimono, ROSENBAUM watching her out of the corner of his eye.

ROSENBAUM. [*Sobbing.*] Oh, what a great play! My, what a pathetic climax!

[*He sobs again, covers his eyes with his handkerchief. MRS. DEAN coughs. ROSENBAUM wipes his eyes, crosses to MRS. DEAN, takes her by the arm, leads her to a chair, then stands beside her. MRS. DEAN is surprised by his actions. ROSENBAUM smiles at her ingratiatingly.*] My dear Mrs. Dean, I have a proposition to make you.

MRS. DEAN. [*Bounding out of her chair.*] Sir!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, this is strictly business.

MRS. DEAN. Then, come to the point. I don't care to have any prying eyes see me in a man's room at the dead of night in my dishabilly.

ROSENBAUM. I have to see you. I just found the most marvellous play for your daughter, the most wonderful part.

MRS. DEAN. [*Sneeringly.*] Pardon me, Mr. Rosenbaum, but you wouldn't recognise a wonderful part if it came up and kissed you.

ROSENBAUM. I'll give Betty anything she wants. I'll take her to New York. I've got the backing.

MRS. DEAN. I listened to your siren song once, and it landed me in Punxatawney. Good evening.

[*She starts to go.*

ROSENBAUM. Too bad. I was going to star Bettina.

[*He sits in the rocking chair.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Stopping.*] What did you say, Mr. Rosenbaum? [*ROSENBAUM laughs quietly. MRS. DEAN comes to him.*] What did you say, Mr. Rosenbaum?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, excuse me. I was just thinking how Bettina Dean in red and yellow electric lights would look.

MRS. DEAN. [*Wistfully.*] In one row across the front of a Broadway theatre.

ROSENBAUM. Two rows would be more imposing.

MRS. DEAN. Perhaps it would. [*She sits at the left of the table.*] I thought you were broke?

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] I can always get backing for a good play. I'll give you a guarantee. I'm only producing this to take Betty into New York.

MRS. DEAN. What is the play? Of course, there's no use my considering it unless Betty has all the situations and all the climaxes. If anybody else in the play has anything to do, why be a star?

ROSENBAUM. We'll make it a monologue.

MRS. DEAN. [*Picking up the manuscript from the table.*] Is this it?

ROSENBAUM. Hadn't you better wait until I have it revised according to your ideas?

[*He tries to take the manuscript.*

MRS. DEAN. I'll attend to that. Is the author amenable?

ROSENBAUM. I think he's an American.

MRS. DEAN. What is the part?

ROSENBAUM. [*Puzzled, then taking a chance.*] An unhappy wife.

MRS. DEAN. Haven't they been done?

ROSENBAUM. I never heard of one being done.

[*MRS. DEAN laughs, but her laugh dies as she sees the title.*

MRS. DEAN. "A Drop of Poison!"

ROSENBAUM. Don't you like it?

MRS. DEAN. Impossible!

ROSENBAUM. Change it. Change it.

[*He sits at the right of the table.*

MRS. DEAN. The title should include the name of the star part. [*She looks at the manuscript.*] Dora Chapman. Let me see. Of course, being the heroine, she's in trouble. I've got it. "Dora's Dilemma."

ROSENBAUM. What's a Dilemma?

MRS. DEAN. Another name for trouble.

ROSENBAUM. That's a great title for any play.

MRS. DEAN. Is Mr. Tompkins going to stage this piece?

ROSENBAUM. Under your direction. You might as well do it first as last.

MRS. DEAN. We'll do it together.

ROSENBAUM. Then the deal's on?

[*He rises, reaches his hand to her across the table.*

MRS. DEAN. Wait a minute. [ROSIE sits again.] Of course, Betty will have the usual privilege of a woman star, no actress younger than herself in the company?

ROSENBAUM. Certainly.

MRS. DEAN. No member of the supporting cast to be mentioned in the newspapers. Of course, if one of them should die, we couldn't prevent a slight obituary.

ROSENBAUM. Anything else?

MRS. DEAN. Yes, the salary.

ROSENBAUM. I'm listening.

MRS. DEAN. Two hundred dollars a week, all dresses and 51% of the profits, the real profits. I'll look over the accounts myself, and remember, Mr. Rosenbaum, I won a prize at school for arithmetic.

ROSENBAUM. My, what a head for a Christian!

[MRS DEAN rises, smiling effusively, and shakes hands with ROSENBAUM, who rises.]

MRS. DEAN. How fortunate for you that we've met—we'll make a lot of money for you.

ROSENBAUM. [*Sapiently.*] You're going to make \$5,000 for me, anyway.

[BETTY enters.]

BETTY. Mother, what are you doing? Aren't you ever coming to bed?

MRS. DEAN. [*Rushing to her.*] Oh, Betty dear, the most wonderful news! You're going to be a star!

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] Am I?

MRS. DEAN. But, darling, aren't you excited?

BETTY. No, I'm sleepy. Who's going to star me?

[*She sits in the rocking-chair.*

ROSENBAUM. Me.

BETTY. [*Rocking.*] I thought we were going with Belasco?

MRS. DEAN. When you can go with Mr. Rosenbaum? The idea!

[ROSENBAUM *smiles conceitedly.*

BETTY. [*Yawning as she rocks.*] It's all the same to me.

MRS. DEAN. You're going to have everything you want.

BETTY. [*Hiding a smile.*] Oh, I am? Will I have my say-so about who's in the company?

ROSENBAUM. Certainly. Certainly.

BETTY. Then I want Effie and Johnnie.

[*She rocks.* MRS. DEAN *looks at ROSIE, who nods assent.*

MRS. DEAN. If there's a place for them.

BETTY. [*Firmly.*] I'll make one. And I want Jerry.

[MRS. DEAN, *dismayed, turns to ROSIE, who signifies consent.*

MRS. DEAN. Of course, if there's a very small bit.

BETTY. No bits. He's going to play the lead.

[MRS. DEAN *and ROSIE are paralysed.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Recovering.*] Do you want to handicap your career?

BETTY. If any other man makes love to me on the stage it handicaps me in real life with Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. Betty, listen to reason. [*To ROSENBAUM.*] This isn't like my little girl.

BETTY. Your little girl's enough like you to put her foot down and put it down hard. You want me to star and I want to marry Jerry. He is either going to be my leading man or my husband. You can take your choice.

[*She rocks.*

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, come here a moment.

[MRS. DEAN *goes to him. He takes her aside.*

BETTY. You two needn't try to put up any schemes.

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Why not let him play it?

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] Have you gone crazy, too?

ROSENBAUM. Don't you see, if she has a good leading

man, it won't be such a walk-over for her. The worse he is, the more she'll shine.

MRS. DEAN. [*Smiling.*] You're a very bright man, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Yes, I think so, but maybe I'm partial.

MRS. DEAN. [*Going to BETTY.*] It's all right, Betty; you shall have your wish, but it's a frightful risk.

BETTY. [*Rocking.*] I'll teach him to play it.

MRS. DEAN. [*Vindictively.*] And I'll rehearse him in it until he drops.

[JERRY, *entering, stops at the sight of them.* ROSIE and JERRY *exchange glances.* BETTY *rises and runs to JERRY.*

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, we're not going to be separated! I'm going to star [*JERRY smiles*] and you're going to be my leading man.

JERRY. What!

[*Amazed, he looks at ROSIE, who moves away.*

BETTY. My leading man!

JERRY. [*Furiously.*] Me? I am not!

[*He turns away.*

BETTY. Why, Jerry!

JERRY. Not by a darn sight.

[*He starts angrily for ROSENBAUM, BETTY towards the door, followed by MRS. DEAN and ROSENBAUM.*

ROSENBAUM. There goes my \$5,000. Wait, wait!

[*MRS. DEAN brings BETTY back and ROSENBAUM returns to JERRY.*

BETTY. I won't star for anybody, unless he plays the lead.

JERRY. No, sir; not on your life.

MRS. DEAN. [*Dramatically.*] This is the man who pretends to love my daughter, and yet he spurns the great honour that is being thrust upon him.

JERRY. I do love your daughter. I'm willing to do anything in reason to make any sacrifice to prove that love, but act again! No! There are limits even to my endurance!

MRS. DEAN. You love her and yet you stand by and see her refuse a great opportunity! The opportunity for which I've spent years of watchful waiting. You'll ruin a great career, ruin all my hopes, my dreams, because of a childish prejudice against the noble art of acting. If you have no thought of her, have pity on me, her mother. For God's sake, be her leading man!

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Go on, do it, and we'll have a sure-fire failure.

JERRY. [*Grasping the idea.*] Mrs. Dean, if I do this for you, if I beat a lot of fool lines into my brain, if I go on painting my face like a chorus girl, what will you do for me?

MRS. DEAN. Try and make an actor of you!

JERRY. Oh, my God!

[*Aghast, he falls back against the table.*]

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE ONE: *The Dress Rehearsal.*

The stage of a Broadway Theatre at four A. M. of a Monday in October during the dress rehearsal of "DORA'S DILEMMA," which began at eight o'clock of the previous evening and is still in progress. The scene when completed is to represent a handsomely decorated and furnished library, the walls panelled in wood to a certain height, above which is a frieze of tapestry. It is now partially finished. At the back is an opening obviously designed to contain a large window in several sections as one of them with leaded glass panes is in place. Through this opening can be seen a garden back drop, lowered only half way, an electric light border, and beyond and below them the back wall of the theatre. Against this wall are stacked several pieces of scenery, the unpainted side turned towards the spectators and stencilled with the words, "Bettina Dean Co." At the rear and at the left of the window is a door leading to a hall. The backing to represent the hall is not in place. At the lower left is a door, the frame and the door are unpainted. At the right of the stage is an opening for a fireplace in which a fire is lighted, but there is no backing, andirons nor logs, so that the "baby" spot which furnishes the effect of a fire-glow is plainly visible. There is a door at the upper right of the room. The ceiling of the room is not in place, the "lines" holding it plainly visible. There is a large couch placed at right angles to the fireplace, on the opposite side of the room a table desk with a desk chair, its back to the spectators. Another chair is at the right of the desk. Below the door at the left,

against the wall, is a high-backed chair and one similar in style at the right of the room below the fireplace. These chairs are in the process of upholstery, the material applied on the arms and the backs, but the seats are still in muslin. An arm-chair, covered in velvet, stands at the right of the window. There are no draperies and the cushion of the window seat has not been covered.

Before the curtain is raised there can be heard a confused murmur of voices as though an act of a play was in progress. When it is raised the room is dimly lighted as though by the effect of lamplight and firelight. The people on the stage are made up as the characters they represent in "DORA'S DILEMMA": JOHNNIE BRINKLEY as CHAPMAN, wearing a moustache, a grey wig and a morning coat, vest and striped trousers; JERRY as DICK BENNETT, in dinner clothes and cap; BILLINGS, a stocky individual in a policeman's uniform, and BETTY as DORA CHAPMAN, in an evening gown. TOMPKINS as HENDERSON, the butler, in livery but in his shirt-sleeves, leans against the door at the back. He is holding the prompt copy of "DORA'S DILEMMA" with which he is following the action of the play. JOHNNY is standing in front of the desk, BILLINGS at the right of it. JERRY in the centre of the room, facing JOHNNY; BETTY behind the couch, on which is JERRY'S overcoat. Their attitudes are tense, their speech excited, as they are at the climactic moment of the third act of "DORA'S DILEMMA."

JOHNNY. [To HENDERSON.] "Turn on those lights."
[To BILLINGS.] "Search him!"

BILLINGS. [Advancing to JERRY and threatening him with a pistol.] "Hold up your hands! Hold up your hands!"

BETTY. Rushing down between BILLINGS and JERRY,

holding aloft the papers.] "Stop! Here are the bonds. I am the thief!"

[TOMPKINS *gives the signal for the curtain.* BETTY, BILLINGS and JOHNNY *hold the picture which, to their disgust, JERRY breaks by pivoting to the front and smiling.* BETTY *hands the bonds to JOHNNY wearily.* He *puts them on the desk as the curtain falls.*

ROSENBAUM. [At the rear of the auditorium.] Take your curtain up.

[There is a pause.

TOMPKINS. [Behind the curtain, and in a loud tone.] Say, you, come on up with that curtain.

[The curtain rises slowly, then MRS. DEAN enters from the door at the left and, coming to the footlights, shades her eyes from their glare and peers out into the auditorium.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum!

ROSENBAUM. What is it?

MRS. DEAN. Take one good look at this scenery and then come on the stage, please!

[JOHNNY and BILLINGS exchange glances, then go.

TOMPKINS *moves down to the chair at the right of the desk, and sits, looking at the manuscript.* BETTY *is pinning up her train with a long safety-pin.*

BETTY. Mother, how was the climax that time?

MRS. DEAN. Electrical!

[She puts her arm around BETTY'S shoulder and starts to the couch.

JERRY. [To MRS. DEAN.] How was I?

MRS. DEAN. You were awful!

[She crosses to the couch. BETTY sits at the left end of it. MRS. DEAN stands beside her. Enter, from the door at the left, GRANBY SMITH, the author, a tall, harassed-looking individual in a lounge suit, outing shirt and soft hat. He comes to JERRY.

SMITH. Mr. Belden!

JERRY. [*Going to him.*] Yes, Mister Author.

SMITH. Are you deliberately trying to kill my play?

JERRY. Am I as bad as that?

SMITH. Bad! [*He groans and, going over to TOMPKINS, jerks the manuscript out of his hand.*] Let me look at what's left of my script.

[*TOMPKINS looks at him sneeringly. SMITH glowers at him and sits on the edge of the desk, poring over his play. ROSENBAUM enters, passing SMITH, who glares at him, and goes to JERRY, who leads him out of the others' hearing.*

JERRY. Oh, Rosie! How is "Dora's Dilemma"?

ROSIE. It's a crime.

[*They laugh.*

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum, that act ought to make them sit up and take notice.

ROSIE. It's great! Great! [*Turning to SMITH.*] Eh, Smith?

SMITH. It's a great act, if it's acted!

[*He throws the manuscript on the desk, takes a chair, places it below the tormentor at the left edge of the proscenium arch, where he sits, his head buried in his hands. ROSENBAUM and JERRY laugh. MRS. DEAN starts to the left. JERRY turns and bumps into her.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Exasperated.*] Mr. Belden, will you sit down? [*JERRY crosses and sits on the floor below the tormentor at the right edge of the proscenium arch.*] Mr. Tompkins, get that scene painter!

[*TOMPKINS looks at MRS. DEAN disgustedly, then turns in his chair at the desk and yells.*

TOMPKINS. Painter! Painter!

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum! This scenery is in awful shape. We'll never be ready for tonight!

ROSENBAUM. Well, you wanted a new production for New York and you got it.

[*He joins SMITH.*

[Enter from the rear door the SCENE PAINTER, an emaciated, dejected-looking person, carrying a paint pail, a colour sheet and a brush.

MRS. DEAN. [Yelling.] Oh, Scene Painter! [He comes down wearily and stands beside her, looking at her vacantly.] I wish to remind you that we open tonight. That door isn't painted. We have no back drop. [Very sarcastically.] Mere details.

[He looks at her slowly, then yawns in her face. MRS. DEAN, furious, is about to address him violently, but her words are lost in the noise of a loud hammering begun at the rear door by MAGINNIS, a burly stage carpenter, wearing overalls and a cap. MRS. DEAN brushes the SCENE PAINTER aside impatiently and begins yelling at MAGINNIS, who pays no attention to her. The SCENE PAINTER goes up to the door at right, looks at it, then places his pot of paint and the colour sheet on a chair by the window, selecting, naturally, the only chair that has been covered with velvet and that might be damaged. Then he walks out of the door at the right, wearily. MRS. DEAN continues to try to make herself heard above the din of the hammering. TOMPKINS finally comes to her rescue.

TOMPKINS. Maginnis!

MAGINNIS. [Truculently.] Well?

MRS. DEAN. If that door squeaks tonight in my daughter's big scene, tomorrow I'll be sending you a wreath of Immortels.

MAGINNIS. [Getting paper of tobacco out of his pocket and taking a chew.] Don't worry; it'll be all right tonight.

MRS. DEAN. [Bitterly.] Everything'll be all right tonight!

MAGINNIS. Yes'sum, I hope the play will.

[He winks at TOMPKINS as he goes.

[MRS. DEAN turns and sees JERRY sitting beside BETTY.

She glares at him. He rises quickly and, going to the window-seat, lies on it. MRS. DEAN having settled him, turns and sees IKE GOLDMAN, the Electrician, entering at the left door. He is tall and rather pleasant-looking. His shirt-sleeves are rolled up, showing that his hands and arms are stained yellow and red by the dyes in which he has been dipping the electric light bulbs that he is carrying. He starts to talk to TOMPKINS when MRS. DEAN interrupts him.

MRS. DEAN. [*Severely.*] Electrician! The stage was much too dark in this act. More light, please.

[*She turns and joins BETTY.*

GOLDMAN. [*To TOMPKINS.*] I should think she'd want to hide this act.

TOMPKINS. Don't worry; it'll be buried tonight! Give us your foot.

GOLDMAN. [*Calling off left.*] Oh, Jimmy, come on up with your foot!

[*He goes.*

HICKSON, *the Property Man, a stout young man with a disagreeable cast of countenance and an overbearing manner, comes in the door at the right, followed by his assistant, STEVE, a small, slight, meek youth. They are wearing sack suits and soft hats. HICKSON goes quickly to the window-seat where JERRY is lying. HICKSON unceremoniously brushes JERRY off the seat and climbs on it. JERRY picks himself up and bows elaborately to HICKSON, who sneers at him, then begins to take a measurement of the window with a foot-rule which his minion, STEVE, has carried on. MRS. DEAN, turning, sees him.*

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Property-man! Property-man!

[*HICKSON pays no attention to her.*

TOMPKINS. Hickson!

HICKSON. [*Measuring the window.*] Well?

MRS. DEAN. Where are the pictures for this act?

HICKSON. [*To STEVE.*] Six foot, four inches. [*To MRS. DEAN.*] What pictures?

TOMPKINS. The ones I ordered.

[*HICKSON jumps off the window-seat, grabs the property list from STEVE'S hand and gives him the ruler.*

He comes down to MRS. DEAN.

HICKSON. [*Insolently.*] Anyone show me any pictures on that list, I'll give 'em a nice little kiss. What pictures do you want?

MRS. DEAN. [*Placating him.*] Can you get me a few fine old masterpieces?

HICKSON. Sure! The property room is just full of 'em. Come on, Steve.

[*STEVE goes out the door at the right. JERRY is standing there. HICKSON, following STEVE, throws JERRY out of the way. JERRY shakes his fist at HICKSON, follows him, but returns immediately.*

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, the author has an idea.

MRS. DEAN. Let me get it before he loses it.

[*She joins ROSENBAUM and SMITH at the proscenium arch at the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, call the company.

TOMPKINS. Everybody on stage, please.

[*He rises wearily.*

BETTY. [*Rising.*] Jerry, how do you like my dress?

[*She unpins the train, letting it fall on the floor, and walks up and down.*

JERRY. Immense!

BETTY. I'm just mad about the train.

[*She moves to the right. JERRY follows her.*

TOMPKINS. [*Yelling.*] Everybody on stage, please! [*The members of the company appear at the various entrances.*] Oh, come on!

[*He glowers at them, but it has no effect. They stroll on. MISS DONAHUE, a tall, beautiful blonde in an elaborate and extremely décolleté dress; MISS FARRINGTON, a red-headed divinity, gorgeously attired;*

MISS TOBY, a pretty, girlish brunette in a maid's costume, and EFFIE, looking remarkably well in a dark blue velvet evening gown, advance to the footlights and, placing their hands below their eyes, look out over them into the auditorium. JERRY comes over to them.

JERRY. Girls, you look great! Effie, if Ziegfeld ever sees you, you're gone!

[BILLINGS comes hurrying in from the door at the left, followed by JOHNNY. They join the group. JERRY goes over to BETTY, whispers to her. She turns and sees that MRS. DEAN is busily engrossed with ROSENBAUM and SMITH, then, taking JERRY'S arm, they run out through the door at the right. EFFIE, MISS DONAHUE, BILLINGS, MISS TOBY, JOHNNY, MISS FARRINGTON and TOMPKINS, who is leaning against the desk, are lined up from right to left. They shift wearily from one foot to another, yawning.]

EFFIE. [Yawning.] What time is it?

[BILLINGS shoves up the sleeve of his policeman's uniform and looks at his wrist watch.]

BILLINGS. [In a pronounced English accent.] A bit after four.

FARRINGTON. If I'm going to keep this job, my dressing-room ought to have a cot and a kitchenette.

MISS DONAHUE. My Gawd, and there are people who want to go on the stage!

TOMPKINS. [Sarcastically.] Where do you horn in?

MISS DONAHUE. Mr. Rosenbaum insisted that he needed my personality to put this piece over.

TOMPKINS. [To MRS. DEAN.] Who do you want in this act?

MRS. DEAN. [Over her shoulder.] I have suggestions for all of you.

[She turns again to SMITH.]

JOHNNY. She's the woman who put the hearse in rehearsal!

[He sits in the chair at the desk.]

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, fetch the script.

[TOMPKINS takes the manuscript to ROSENBAUM, who abetted by MRS. DEAN begins to browbeat the author.]

MISS TOBY. What are they going to do?

EFFIE. *[Sarcastically.]* I suppose they're going to rewrite the piece again and give Dora another dilemma.

MISS DONAHUE. If it isn't right now, with three weeks' rehearsal and two weeks on the road, I can see where I go back to manicuring.

[EFFIE goes up to the couch and puts on JERRY'S overcoat, which is thrown across it.]

MRS. DEAN. *[To SMITH.]* Just let that suggestion penetrate, if it can.

[She crosses over and stands in front of the company. In her hand are slips of paper on which she has made memoranda.]

TOMPKINS. Now, children!

ROSENBAUM. *[Following MRS. DEAN.]* Mrs. Dean has some valuable suggestions.

[The company look at one another disgustedly. TOMPKINS sits on the left end of the desk. SMITH, in his chair at the proscenium arch, groans loudly. Everyone looks at SMITH.]

MRS. DEAN. *[To SMITH.]* Mr. Smith, are you in pain?

SMITH. Would it matter to anybody if I were?

[HICKSON and STEVE return through the door at the right, carrying the "masterpieces." STEVE comes down between EFFIE and MISS DONAHUE. HICKSON comes down between MISS FARRINGTON and MISS TOBY. They push the actresses aside rudely.]

ROSENBAUM. *[Going to HICKSON.]* What is it?

HICKSON. Here's your masterpieces. Show 'em, Steve!

[STEVE turns the picture face out to the audience. It

is a badly painted watermelon with a slice cut out of it. HICKSON turns the picture he is carrying. It is a plate of lemons.

ROSENBAUM. [*Pointing to HICKSON's picture.*] Say, what is that?

HICKSON. [*To ROSENBAUM.*] A plate of lemons. [*Looking at SMITH.*] I thought it was appropriate.

[*SMITH rises and rushes to the centre. ROSENBAUM stops him. STEVE and HICKSON look indifferently at SMITH.*

STEVE. Who's the string-bean?

HICKSON. [*Indicating SMITH.*] That? It's the author, the poor simp! Come on.

[*ROSENBAUM takes SMITH back to the chair, while HICKSON and STEVE push their way between the actresses again and go. EFFIE settles herself comfortably in the corner of the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Advancing.*] Attention, please. Now Mrs. Dean—

MRS. DEAN. [*Consulting notes.*] Oh, where was I? Oh, yes, Miss Toby! [*MISS TOBY, who is made up like a "vamp" with very red lips and a very white face, walks down centre. MRS. DEAN leads her down to the foot-lights.*] My dear, more red on your cheeks, and less on your lips. I know that your home life is beyond reproach, but if you're going to look like that, no one in the audience will believe it. [*MISS TOBY shrugs her shoulder, goes up and sits on window-seat.*] Miss Farrington. [*MISS FARRINGTON, who is talking to BILLINGS, pays no attention to MRS. DEAN.*] Miss Farrington! [*MISS FARRINGTON walks down left of MRS. DEAN in a very insolent manner.*] When you're introduced to the gentlemen in this act, smile pleasantly. Don't try to lure them to destruction. [*MISS FARRINGTON is furious. She joins MISS TOBY on the window-seat.*] Oh, Miss Donahue! Step down, please! [*MISS DONAHUE walks down to the foot-lights.*] Now, would you turn around, please? [*MISS*

DONAHUE *turns. She is in an evening dress, which is cut to the "limit" in the back.*] Are you dressed for the opera, or exposed for an operation?

MISS DONAHUE. [*Very languidly.*] My public is used to seeing a great deal of me.

ROSENBAUM. [*Winking at TOMPKINS.*] They're not going to be disappointed.

[MISS DONAHUE *smiles at ROSENBAUM. BILLINGS puts his monocle in his eye and, staring at her, follows her up to the window-seat.*

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Effie! Effie! [EFFIE, *rising, drops the overcoat from her shoulders and walks down to MRS. DEAN, who turns to ROSENBAUM.*] Don't you think she looks a little young?

EFFIE. It's not my fault if I've retained my youth and beauty.

MRS. DEAN. [*Snapping at her.*] Mr. Belden is supposed to be your son.

EFFIE. I could have been married when I was sixteen.

ROSENBAUM. It's my fault. I told her to cut out the grey hair. Who wants to look at an old woman, if they don't have to?

MRS. DEAN. [*Satirically.*] You seem to forget that she's a broken-hearted mother. Trouble seems to make her hair grow brighter. [EFFIE *looks at her indignantly, and walks away. MRS. DEAN goes towards JOHNNY. She beckons to ROSENBAUM.*] What's the matter with Johnny's nose?

ROSENBAUM. I don't know. Let's look at it. [*Calling.*] Johnny!

[JOHNNY, *who has been asleep in the chair beside the desk, rouses himself, then comes down to ROSENBAUM and MRS. DEAN. They look at him. TOMPKINS rises and comes down to the left of JOHNNY. EFFIE turns and comes to the right of him. SMITH moves impatiently in his chair.*

JOHNNY. What is it?

ROSENBAUM. Your nose.

MRS. DEAN. If you could make it recede a little.

JOHNNY. I'm no Doctor Woodbury.

EFFIE. Looks all right to me.

ROSENBAUM. Maybe it's the moustache.

MRS. DEAN. Perhaps if you wore a bow tie.

TOMPKINS. Have you tried white grease paint?

JOHNNY. I've tried everything but putting a ring in it.

[*Everybody, even MRS. DEAN, roars with laughter, which maddens SMITH who rises and rushes over to them.*]

SMITH. Great Heavens! Do you people realise that we open tonight?

[*Everyone stops and looks in surprise at SMITH.*]

ROSENBAUM. Sure, we realise it.

SMITH. Then why don't you get down to business, get to something important?

MRS. DEAN. Important? These things are vital.

SMITH. Vital! Is his nose vital?

JOHNNY. I can't get along without it.

[*Everybody laughs again.*]

SMITH. [*Furiously.*] You've seen him wear it every night for two weeks. Why wait until the last minute to attend to such fiddling details?

MRS. DEAN. [*Angrily.*] If we hadn't had to "fiddle" so much with that ill-constructed mass of verbiage, you call a play.

[*She walks away to the right. SMITH to the left.*]

ROSENBAUM. Come, come, children, this is a rehearsal, not a prize fight. [*He runs to MRS. DEAN and whispers.*] After all, he is the author. Humour him now. We'll do what we like afterwards. [*He runs over to SMITH, whispers.*] Humour her. She's a bear.

[*He puts his arm through SMITH's and drags him over to MRS. DEAN, then putting his arm through MRS. DEAN'S, he stands between them smiling. They are the personification of dislike and antagonism.*]

ROSENBAUM. Now, we're all friends again, see. [To MRS. DEAN.] Now, what next?

MRS. DEAN. [Witheringly.] Oh, no, let's straighten out Mr. Smith's little worries.

[She moves away to the right and leans against the proscenium arch. JOHNNY and EFFIE, who is again wearing JERRY'S overcoat, are seated on the couch, TOMPKINS beside the desk, the others in the window-seat.]

ROSENBAUM. [To SMITH.] Now, what's on your mind?

SMITH. [Impressively.] Well, I've always thought that if Mrs. Brinkley and Mr. Belden played their scene on that side of the stage [indicating right], instead of on this side [indicating left], it would improve it wonderfully.

[He smiles in self-satisfaction.]

EFFIE. More study.

MRS. DEAN. My dear, let's do anything that will improve it.

[SMITH glares at MRS. DEAN and walks away to the left.]

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, we'll take Mrs. Brinkley's and Belden's scene.

[Enter the SCENE PAINTER with a ladder. He rests it against the frame of the door at the right, then getting the paint pail from the armchair, climbs up on ladder.]

TOMPKINS. [Calling.] Mrs. Brinkley and Belden! Clear everybody!

[MISS TOBY, MISS FARRINGTON and BILLINGS exit hurriedly and then reappear at the door at the left, to watch the rehearsal of the scene. JOHNNY and MISS DONAHUE drag themselves off wearily not interested in anything. MRS. DEAN goes to the proscenium arch at the right, ROSENBAUM, to it at the left. TOMPKINS turns and sees the SCENE PAINTER.]

TOMPKINS. [Furiously.] Painter! I said clear.

[*The painter pays not the slightest attention. There is a pause.*]

ROSENBAUM. Oh, let him paint.

EFFIE. [*Wearily to MRS. DEAN.*] Where do you want me to begin?

MRS. DEAN. Ask the author.

SMITH. From Belden's entrance. [*EFFIE starts to walk over to the desk at the left. SMITH rushes to her.*] And we're going to play it over there.

[*He points to the right.*]

EFFIE. [*Angrily.*] It's a fine time to fuss me in the only scene I have in the play. [*SMITH strides away furiously. EFFIE, thinking she "has him," points to a photograph on the desk.*] [*Innocently.*] How do I get that photograph?

SMITH. [*Sarcastically.*] Don't you think——

EFFIE. [*Sweetly.*] I have been engaged to act, not to think.

[*SMITH gives it up in despair and goes to his chair at the proscenium and sinks into it wearily. ROSENBAUM tries to console him. MRS. DEAN looks over at them in sarcastic pity. JERRY and BETTY, unseen by anyone, do a fox trot back of the window from the right to the left and disappear. EFFIE stands victorious in the centre. TOMPKINS is delighted with her.*]

EFFIE. [*Patiently.*] Well?

MRS. DEAN. Oh, take it with you.

EFFIE. [*Getting the photograph from the desk.*] Is this supposed to be my son's photograph?

SMITH. Certainly, certainly.

EFFIE. Well, I might have something to get me into a sentimental frame of mind. *This is Lillian Russell.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Taking it, hands it to TOMPKINS.*] Tompkins, make a note of that.

TOMPKINS. Hickson!

[*HICKSON appears at the door at the left.*]

HICKSON. [*Snarling.*] What do you want?

TOMPKINS. [*Handing the photograph to HICKSON.*] Strike Russell!

[*HICKSON takes the photograph and goes.*]

EFFIE. M-m-m-m-m-m—long speech ending with [*very sweetly*] “overflowing with tenderness.” [*JERRY and BETTY fox-trot across back of the window left to right, and disappear. There is a pause. Acidly.*] “Overflowing with tenderness——”

[*A pause.*]

ROSENBAUM. [*Irritated.*] Where’s Belden?

[*BETTY and JERRY, still unobserved, trot back of the window, doing a back and forward step.*]

TOMPKINS. [*At the desk.*] I called him.

MRS. DEAN. [*Viciously calling.*] “Overflowing with tenderness——”

TOMPKINS. Oh Belden!

BETTY. [*Off stage.*] Jerry, your cue!

JERRY. Coming!

[*In crossing to the right at the back of the window, he knocks a large tray off the top of a bunch light, then he appears at the door where the PAINTER is on the ladder.*]

EVERYBODY. The ladder! The ladder! Don’t walk under the ladder!

[*JERRY disappears, then is seen running past the window to the door at the rear, from which he enters breathlessly.*]

JERRY. I’m sorry. [*He walks down to the chair at the desk, turns and sees EFFIE on the couch.*] What are you doing over there?

EFFIE. Don’t ask me.

JERRY. How do I get there!

ROSENBAUM. Walk.

MRS. DEAN. Unless you’ve developed locomotor ataxia.

EFFIE. [*Crossly.*] Oh, come on. [*She rises, goes to JERRY, and puts her hands on his shoulder and in the char-*]

acter of MR. BENNETT, *speaks tenderly.*] "My son! My son!"

[She is interrupted by the crash of a falling object off stage.]

TOMPKINS. *[Yelling.]* Quiet off stage!

EFFIE. "My——"

[Again she is interrupted by a similar sound.]

M'GINNIS. *[Off stage.]* Hey Monk, keep quiet.

JERRY. "Mother—mother—you——"

MONK. *[Off stage.]* Damn slave driver!

ROSENBAUM. Quiet off stage!

EFFIE. "Promise me you'll never do this again—or——"

M'GINNIS. *[Off stage.]* I'll cave in yer dome!

[JERRY laughs. EFFIE moves away in disgust.]

SMITH rises and rushes to ROSENBAUM.

SMITH. *[Bitterly.]* Marvellous discipline!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, cut to the exit.

[EFFIE goes to JERRY, places her hands on his shoulders, looking up into his face with a sweet, motherly expression.]

EFFIE. "You've made me so happy! My son!"

JERRY. Do you want me to move away from here now?

EFFIE. *[Grabs him by the shoulder, very angrily.]* You stand still until I get through with you. *[Tenderly.]* "My son, my son." Kiss. Bing——

[She makes a motion of kissing him on the left cheek, then on the right.]

JERRY. Bing——

EFFIE. Let me see. I turned that way, now I turn this way. *[She starts for the rear door, scowling at SMITH.]* Well, I hope I get off, it's a mile up to this door.

[She meets JOHNNY, who is waiting for her with a cup of coffee. They both disappear off left, EFFIE talking angrily.]

ROSENBAUM. What else?

SMITH. *[Coming to the centre.]* The love scene.

MRS. DEAN. [*Moving toward him.*] Do you think it's necessary?

JERRY. Oh sure, I'd like to. [*He dashes up to the rear door and calls off stage.*] Oh, Betty!

BETTY. [*Off stage.*] In a minute!

SMITH. [*To MRS. DEAN.*] Belden is the limit in that love scene!

[*BETTY appears at the rear door carrying two cups of coffee. She comes down to her mother.*

BETTY. Here mother.

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking the cup.*] Thank you, darling.

BETTY. [*Offering the cup to SMITH.*] Mr. Smith.

SMITH. Oh, no.

[*He waves it aside impatiently and goes to the couch where he sits. BETTY gives the cup to JERRY, who puts it on the stand in the left corner of the window.*

JERRY. [*Eagerly.*] Come on, the love scene.

[*MISS DONAHUE appears at the back of the window and sits on the off stage side of the window-seat.*

BETTY and JERRY take positions at the centre, BETTY at the right of JERRY. MRS. DEAN stands at the proscenium arch, at the right. TOMPKINS is seated on the desk with the manuscript. ROSENBAUM stands beside him.

JERRY. Are you set?

BETTY. [*Striking an affected attitude.*] Uh huh!

JERRY. Oh, excuse me a minute.

[*He crosses to BETTY and they try three positions of the arms in an embrace, and each time JERRY kisses her. SMITH looks at MRS. DEAN imploringly.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Wearily.*] We're waiting, Mr. Belden.

JERRY. Just getting the finish right.

MRS. DEAN. Well, we won't overdo it.

[*She puts her coffee cup on the mantel. BETTY, her back towards JERRY, re-assumes her pose. JERRY goes to the left of her.*

JERRY. Ah—ah—m-m-m-m-m-m——

[*He turns and looks at TOMPKINS.*]

TOMPKINS. [*Prompting him.*] “Oh my——”

JERRY. “Oh my——” [*He looks at TOMPKINS again.*]
Oh my what?

TOMPKINS. [*Prompting.*] “Adored——”

JERRY Adored. “Oh, my adored one.” [*He goes to SMITH.*] Say, can’t we can that “adored one”?

SMITH. [*Jumping up.*] Why?

JERRY. I’d never say that.

SMITH. [*To MRS. DEAN.*] *He’d never say that!* [*To JERRY.*] You’d never—— Do you realise I’ve worked days and nights to find that phrase?

JERRY. [*Laughingly.*] Did you? Well, I can find a whole raft of things to say to her and not half try. Can’t I, Betty?

[*SMITH falls back on the couch. JERRY goes up to take BETTY in his arms.*]

MRS. DEAN. [*Furiously.*] Mr. Belden, this is a rehearsal!

JERRY. Oh, excuse me! [*He takes his position at the left of BETTY.*] Ah—m-m-m-m-m-m-m—— [*Laughing, he looks at TOMPKINS for assistance.*] Isn’t that a funny thing?

TOMPKINS. [*Angrily.*] The same.

JERRY. Oh, yes. [*Very amateurishly.*] “Oh, my adored one. I love you with a fever——”

SMITH. [*Jumping up from the couch distractedly.*]
Fervour! Fervour!

JERRY. “I love you with a fervour that’s undying. [*He advances one step awkwardly toward BETTY.*] Can’t you [*another step*], won’t you [*another step*] love me just a little in return?”

BETTY. [*Passionately.*] “I love you now.”

[*She turns and throws herself into his arms.*]

JERRY. [*Casually.*] “And I love you.”

[*SMITH looks at him in disgust, then throws himself*

upon the couch. MRS. DEAN, overcome by the horror of his acting, bows her head on the mantel-piece. ROSENBAUM shivers, then looks at TOMPKINS, whose expression is one of pain. BETTY moves away wearily and sits beside MISS DONAHUE on the window-seat.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, it's so tame!

MRS. DEAN. [*Despairingly.*] I give it up.

[*She joins SMITH on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. What do you think, Tompkins?

TOMPKINS. [*Rising.*] If he got a little, a little——

[*He tries to illustrate "pep" by a movement of his hands.*

ROSENBAUM. Yes, that's a good idea. Oh Jerry. [*JERRY joins them.*] Now, what you want in this scene is a little——

[*He imitates TOMPKINS' gesture.*

[*SMITH, afraid that they are going to do something else to his play, rushes down to the group. TOMPKINS and ROSENBAUM repeat their gesture. JERRY watches them utterly bewildered, then imitating them, turns to SMITH.*

JERRY. What does that mean?

[*ROSENBAUM and TOMPKINS look despairingly at JERRY, then shaking their heads despondently, move away, ROSENBAUM sitting in the chair at the proscenium arch at the left, TOMPKINS on the desk, his back to JERRY.*

SMITH. I suppose he means to put in a little pep!

JERRY. Mrs. Dean asked me to tone it down.

SMITH. No, no! And Miss Dean [*going up to her*], get a little abandon into it.

MRS. DEAN. [*Jumping up.*] Betty! Some chaste abandon.

[*She goes to the proscenium arch at the right. SMITH, hopeless, sits on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Impatiently.*] Oh go on, take the finish.

[BETTY *rising, comes toward* JERRY. *He puts his arms around her.*

JERRY. [*Indifferently.*] "I love you." [*Passionately.*] Oh Lord! How much I love you!

SMITH. [*Rising.*] That last line isn't in the part.

JERRY. It just slipped out naturally.

BETTY. Oh say it, Jerry, it sounds awfully sweet.

SMITH. Oh, are you going to re-write my piece, too, Miss Dean?

MRS. DEAN. Everybody else has, why discriminate against my daughter?

[SMITH *rushes to leave the stage.* ROSENBAUM *rises and grabs him.*

ROSENBAUM. Oh, what makes you authors so sensitive?

MRS. DEAN. Now, if Mr. Smith has finished——

SMITH. Oh, I'm through, I'm through.

[*He sits on the chair from which ROSENBAUM has risen.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking command.*] Then we'll take the third act climax.

JERRY. Oh, the one I'm punk in?

MRS. DEAN. That designation would fit any of your scenes.

JERRY. Will you tell me what you want me to do?

MRS. DEAN. Do you know what Dora's Dilemma is?

JERRY. No, do you?

MRS. DEAN. You've been playing in this piece for two weeks.

JERRY. You could play in this piece for two years and not know what it's about.

SMITH. [*Rushing at JERRY.*] Oh, is that so?

JERRY. I beg your pardon. Where am I worst?

MRS. DEAN. Words fail me! [*To ROSENBAUM.*] You talk to him.

[*She sinks on the couch, utterly worn out.* SMITH *joins* MISS DONAHUE *on the window-seat.* *She tries to console him.* BETTY *sits in the chair be-*

side the desk on which TOMPKINS is seated. MISS FARRINGTON, MISS TOBY and BILLINGS leave their post of observation at the door at the left. EFFIE appears yawning, and goes to the chair where SMITH has been seated and huddled in JERRY'S overcoat, falls asleep. JERRY, eager to do what is asked of him, stands at the centre. ROSENBAUM advances on him belligerently.

ROSENBAUM. You're afraid your firm will miss the bonds. You've come here to Chapman's library to get them. You're desperate.

JERRY. Why am I desperate?

[ROSENBAUM looks at him. He gives it up and joins MRS. DEAN on the couch. SMITH rushes down to JERRY.]

SMITH. Great Heavens! Didn't you tell your mother earlier in this act that if you didn't get the bonds you'd commit suicide?

MRS. DEAN. [*Bitterly.*] Sometimes I wish he had.

BETTY. [*Rising impatiently, goes to JERRY.*] Oh, never mind what it all means. It's a part, Jerry,—act it.

[*She returns to the chair wearily.*]

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] We'll take the scene from "Behind the curtain."

[MISS DONAHUE leaves the window-seat and disappears to the right, MISS TOBY and MISS FARRINGTON appear at the back of the window going towards the left. SMITH takes a position at the back of the couch. ROSENBAUM remains seated on it. MRS. DEAN goes to the right to watch the scene. JERRY goes up to the window-seat, TOMPKINS to the door, BETTY following him.]

TOMPKINS. Oh, Billings, Brinkley! On stage.

BILLINGS. Coming.

[BILLINGS and JOHNNY enter.]

TOMPKINS. Ready everybody. The struggle in the dark.

[BETTY takes her position at the door, her back to the

spectators, her hand outstretched towards the button that is supposed to switch on the electric lights. BILLINGS stands behind the desk, JOHNNY in front of it.

JOHNNY. [*Very dramatically.*] Bla-bla-bla—long speech ending in “Behind the curtain——”

JERRY. [*Standing on the window-seat.*] Where’s my overcoat?

[*He jumps off the seat.*

MRS. DEAN. How should I know? Ask the stage manager.

TOMPKINS. Now I’m the coat room boy.

JOHNNY. Heaven preserve us from these amateurs.

[*SMITH looks for it at the back of the couch, ROSENBAUM underneath it, MRS. DEAN under the chair at the right, TOMPKINS behind the window-seat.*

BETTY, BILLINGS and JOHNNY wait, resignedly.

ROSENBAUM. I paid sixty dollars for that coat.

BETTY. [*Impatiently.*] Jerry, where did you put it?

JERRY. I don’t know.

SMITH. Is there any damn thing you do know?

BETTY. Effie’s got it on.

JOHNNY. That woman would sleep anywhere. [*He goes to her and shakes her.*] Brooklyn! All out!

EFFIE. Why did you wake me? I dreamt the play was a hit!

[*Everybody is disgusted. JERRY laughs, but subsides as they all turn and stare at him witheringly. EFFIE rises, JOHNNY grabs the coat and takes it to JERRY who puts it on. EFFIE, yawning and shivering with the cold, starts for the door at the left. SMITH crossing to the chair where EFFIE has been seated, glowers at her. EFFIE tosses her head and goes. MRS. DEAN is leaning against the proscenium arch at the right, ROSENBAUM beside her. BETTY, BILLINGS and JOHNNY take their places. TOMPKINS*

stands in the door at the left, holding the manuscript. JERRY starts for the window.

JERRY. [*Stopping.*] Where are the bonds?

JOHNNY. [*Giving him the bonds which he has taken from the desk.*] You ought to have a nurse!

TOMPKINS. [*Wearily.*] Ready, ready!

[*JERRY gets up on the window-seat.*

JOHNNY. [*Very dramatically.*] Bla-bla—long speech, ending with “Behind the curtain”——

JERRY. Where’s the curtain?

MRS. DEAN. We will simulate the curtain.

JERRY. What do I do to the curtain?

BETTY. Oh, pretend there’s one there.

TOMPKINS. [*Despairingly.*] Ready!

JERRY. Now wait a minute, there’s going to be a curtain?

ROSENBAUM. [*Fiercely.*] Of course, of course!

JERRY. No harm in asking. I was only introduced to this window tonight.

[*He gets in position to leap from the window-seat.*

TOMPKINS. Ready, Johnny?

JOHNNY. Wait a minute. [*To JERRY.*] Have you got everything?

JERRY. [*Feeling in the pocket of his overcoat.*] Yes.

JOHNNY. Bla-bla-bla long speech ending with “behind the curtain.”

BETTY. [*At door.*] Business. Button. Lights out—bing!

[*On the word “bing” she presses the button on the right side of the door. The lights do not go out. Everybody on the stage looks up to see what is the matter with the lights. BETTY comes down impatiently.*

BETTY. Oh mother, why don’t the lights go out?

ROSENBAUM. Call the electrician!

TOMPKINS. [*Calling.*] Goldman!

HICKSON. [*Appearing at the rear door.*] The electrician's gone to breakfast.

[*He goes.*]

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Belden, we'll——

JERRY. We will simulate the darkness. I get you, I get you.

BETTY. [*BETTY returns to the door, repeating the business of pushing the button.*] Business, button, lights out, bing!

[*BILLINGS starts for the window. JERRY springs off the window-seat. They seize each other fiercely, and struggle. BETTY rushes behind them to the back of the couch, and begins, apparently, to look for something. She is being very dramatic. Suddenly she stops and runs toward MRS. DEAN.*]

BETTY. [*Shrieking.*] Mother! Mother! He's got on the overcoat. [*She rushes at JERRY in a fury.*] Jerry Belden, if you forget to take that overcoat off tonight, behind that curtain and leave it there for me [*pointing to the back of the couch*] I'll die right here.

[*She sits on the couch, her head buried in her hands.*]

JERRY. [*Going to her.*] That's all right. I won't forget it, but if I do, don't worry!

[*BILLINGS is standing by the desk. JERRY leaps through the air and lands on him. They begin to struggle fiercely. ROSENBAUM rushes and grabs JERRY; MRS. DEAN, following him, tries to get to JERRY. SMITH runs up and seizes BILLINGS. They try to stop the struggle, but as it is the one thing that JERRY can do well, he continues and pulls everybody to and fro in the room. Finally it penetrates to him that they want to tell him something, so he stops.*]

MRS. DEAN. [*Shrieking at JERRY.*] It's her stealing the bonds out of your overcoat when you are being searched that is the big moment of the act.

ROSENBAUM. [*Raging.*] If you have the coat on, how is she going to get them?

SMITH. [*Wildly.*] The overcoat's the plot of my piece.

JERRY. [*Placidly.*] All right, all right! No need to get excited. I'll take it off.

[*He takes off the overcoat, puts it on the back of the couch and starts for the window-seat. MRS. DEAN, very much shaken, moves away, supported on one side by ROSENBAUM, and on the other by SMITH. It is the one moment in which the three are in accord.*]

SMITH. Can you beat it! Forgot to take off the overcoat!

ROSENBAUM. You'll never get your curtain down tonight if he does it.

MRS. DEAN. If I had the strength to do it, I'd strangle him now.

TOMPKINS. [*Resignedly.*] Ready! Ready!

[*BETTY, BILLINGS and JOHNNY again take their positions. ROSIE and MRS. DEAN go over to the right. SMITH to his chair at the left. They wait. JERRY starts to get on the window-seat, stops and comes down.*]

JERRY. Excuse me, I'll tell you what rattles me. It's just going over bits of the scene. I don't know where I'm at to have somebody say—"bla-bla-bla—long speech ending in 'Behind the curtain.'" It gets my nanny. Now if we could only go over the whole thing once.

MRS. DEAN. Well, I suppose——

BETTY. [*Coming down angrily.*] We haven't done the last act yet. I want a few hours' sleep before the performance.

[*She returns to the door.*]

JERRY. It's easy enough for you people, but I'm not an actor.

SMITH. I should say not!

JERRY Say, you're not any more stuck on me than I am on myself.

[MAGGINIS enters from the rear door yawning. He looks up at the ceiling and then calls to the men in the "flies."

MAGINNIS. Hey you, come on down with yer back lines, yer back lines, you dope!

JERRY. [Turning to MAGINNIS.] Are you talking to me?

MAGGINIS. No, I don't talk to actors!

[The ceiling is lowered into place with a rush, and MAGGINIS goes.

JERRY. Oh, let her go!

BETTY. Business—door—button—lights out—bing!

[JERRY dashes out from the window and throws the overcoat on the back of the couch. BETTY runs to get the bonds from the pocket. BILLINGS rushes at JERRY, who grabs him and they begin to rehearse in plain view an old fashioned "struggle in the dark" in which violent noise is more important than violent action. With JERRY'S assistance, BILLINGS vaults lightly in the air and JERRY holds him above his head, then falls slowly backward with BILLINGS on top of him, both grunting loudly.

BILLINGS. Are you all right?

JERRY. Yes. Choke me.

[BILLINGS does so and JERRY emits sounds of strangling. They roll over. JERRY, who is on top, rises and standing over BILLINGS, takes him by the shoulders and slams him gently up and down two or three times as BILLINGS groans and imitates the sound of a falling body by knocking loudly on the floor with his heel.

JERRY. Are you comfortable?

BILLINGS. Oh, very!

[JERRY pulls BILLINGS up on his feet, then turns him around, his back to the desk, and begins to back him towards it.

JERRY. One—two—three—slap!

[*He slaps BILLINGS' open hand which BILLINGS holds up to the left side of his face. BILLINGS groans.*

JERRY. One—two—three—slap—— [The same "business" is repeated. BILLINGS groans very loudly. They back to the right of the desk. JERRY, holding BILLINGS up very carefully, pushes a desk blotter and the phone out of the way, then lays BILLINGS very gently on the top of the desk.] I'm not hurting you?

BILLINGS. Not at all, old dear!

[JERRY slaps the desk loudly with his right hand. BILLINGS groans frightfully. JERRY pulls BILLINGS up on his feet. BILLINGS pushes JERRY lightly away.

JERRY staggers backwards wildly to the right.

JOHNNY points at him dramatically.

JOHNNY. "Search him!"

BILLINGS. "Put up your hands! [JERRY hesitates. BETTY gets the bonds out of the overcoat pocket.] Put up your hands!"

[*He points the revolver at JERRY, who puts up his hands. BETTY rushes down between JERRY and BILLINGS to the centre, making a picture with the bonds held high over her head in her right hand.*

BETTY. "Stop! Here are the bonds! I am the thief!"

TOMPKINS. Curtain!

[*He imitates with a downward motion of his hand the falling of the curtain. BETTY, JOHNNY and BILLINGS "hold the picture," tensely dramatic in their attitudes and expressions. JERRY turns to the front and grins idiotically, destroying the effect of the climax. The others see him and "break the picture," BETTY sitting in the window-seat, JOHNNY in the chair, in front of the desk, TOMPKINS on the desk, BILLINGS in the chair at the right of the desk, SMITH slumps despairingly in his chair at the left, MRS. DEAN on the couch and beside her ROSENBAUM holding her hand. Their backs are turned 36*

JERRY, *who is so awful they cannot bear to look at him.* JERRY looks at them, smiling a little wistfully. There is a pause, then JERRY worried, almost frightened, joins BETTY on the window-seat. She refuses to talk to him.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising, beckoning to SMITH.*] Well, what do you think?

SMITH. [*Meeting him.*] Terrible!

MRS. DEAN. [*Going to them.*] I don't believe we can open with him.

SMITH. Every time he comes on he takes the child of my brain and simply chokes it to death.

ROSENBAUM. Let's take it from his first entrance. Maybe he can work into it. Children, we'll take it over from Jerry's entrance.

[SMITH, ROSENBAUM and MRS. DEAN return to their places at the left and at the right. JOHNNY sits in the chair in front of the desk. BILLINGS goes.]

BETTY. Oh dear!

JERRY. Now wait a minute. This is the place that I wear the overcoat?

MRS. DEAN. [*Angrily.*] Yes.

JERRY. Good.

TOMPKINS. [*Calling.*] Oh, Hickson, ready with your door slam.

HICKSON. [*Off stage.*] All right.

[TOMPKINS goes out the rear door, shutting it.]

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] Business—bonds—door. [*She opens the rear door. As she does so "a door slam" is heard off stage.*] [*Dramatically.*] "My God! Henderson!"

[*She looks around wildly, then running to the desk, sits beside it and falls forward across it as though fainting.*]

TOMPKINS. [*Entering as HENDERSON looks at her, then rushes off, crying.*] "Help! Help! Help!"

[JERRY enters from the window, wearing a light overcoat. He sees BETTY.

JERRY. "Dora! Dora! What's happened?"

BETTY. [*Rushing to him wildly.*] "Dick! Dick! Here are your bonds!"

[*She puts the bonds in the pocket of JERRY's overcoat.*

JERRY puts his arms about her carelessly.

JERRY. [*In a spiritless sing-song.*] "Oh Dora, you have saved my honour."

[BETTY pushes JERRY away from her and sits on the desk, her back to him. JOHNNY throws himself disgustedly in the chair at the front of the desk. TOMPKINS enters the rear door and falls in the arm-chair at the left. SMITH collapses utterly. ROSENBAUM staggers to the proscenium arch at the right, burying his head in his arms. JERRY, bewildered, walks to the door at the right. MRS. DEAN rises, staggers towards ROSENBAUM, who has turned and advanced to meet her. ROSENBAUM supports her in his arms.

MRS. DEAN. This is awful! Awful!

ROSENBAUM. Can't you show him?

MRS. DEAN. I'll try. Mr. Belden, stand down, please. See if you can get a faint glimmering by watching me. [JERRY, frightened by her tone, comes down, giving her a wide berth and in doing so stumbles into the footlight trough. He scrambles out and stands watching her.] Ready, Betty.

BETTY. [*Turning around.*] Oh, let Mr. Tompkins stand for me. I'm so tired.

TOMPKINS. I can't and give the cue.

[*He goes.*

ROSENBAUM. I'll do it for you, Betty.

[BETTY starts towards the right. JERRY meets her.

JERRY. I'm awfully sorry, Betty.

BETTY. [*Stamping her foot.*] You didn't even try.

[*She sits in the chair near the fireplace.*

JERRY. [*Following her.*] Well, I knew the words.

[*Betty turns her back to him. JERRY leans against the proscenium arch, utterly disconsolate. The company and stage hands, learning that ROSENBAUM and MRS. DEAN are going to rehearse the scene, take points of vantage to see them. MISS TOBY and MISS FARRINGTON enter at the right. MISS TOBY sits on the table below the door, MISS FARRINGTON leaning against it. MISS DONAHUE sits on the window-seat, M'GINNIS, HICKSON and STEVE stand at the back of the window. EFFIE, GOLDMAN and BILLINGS appear in the door at the left. SMITH remains seated in his chair, JOHNNY at the desk. TOMPKINS is in the wings at the left waiting for his cue to enter as HENDERSON. MRS. DEAN in JERRY'S part of DICK, climbs on the window-seat, ROSENBAUM in BETTY'S part of DORA, gets the bonds. Both of them are very serious in their intention but highly ludicrous in the result as they are naturally quite unfitted physically for the hero and the heroine of "DORA'S DILEMMA." ROSENBAUM, forgetting the cigar in his mouth, imitates BETTY'S stage "business" at the desk, then backs up towards the rear door. He opens it. The necessary "cue" of a closing door is not heard.*]

ROSENBAUM. [*Irritably.*] Where's that door slam?

[*HICKSON rushes off right. MAGINNIS rushes off left. Immediately there are two door slams heard off left followed by two off right.*]

ROSENBAUM. My God! Four Hendersons!

[*He staggers down to the table, falls into the chair, still imitating BETTY.*]

TOMPKINS. [*Entering the rear door, sees the "situation."*] "Help! Help!"

[*The first "Help" is given loudly, the other two die away as TOMPKINS, wishing to see the scene, does*]

not go as demanded by the "business," but remains in the doorway.

MRS. DEAN. [*Rushing down from the window.*] "Dora! Dora! What's happened?"

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising, and meeting her at the centre.*] "Dick! Dick! Here are your bonds!"

MRS. DEAN. [*Dramatically.*] "Dora! Dora! You have saved my honour!"

[*MRS. DEAN clasps ROSENBAUM in her arms fervently, crushing his hat over his eyes, forcing it to an angle of 45 degrees. ROSENBAUM blindly tries with his left hand to find the pocket in MRS. DEAN'S clothes in order to imitate BETTY'S "business" of placing the bonds in JERRY'S overcoat. The company, stifling their laughter, fall out of the room. SMITH is almost fainting with horror. BETTY, stuffing her handkerchief in her mouth, rocks with mirth. JERRY is not so discreet, for shrieking with laughter, he advances to ROSENBAUM and MRS. DEAN, who at the sound of his glee have started apart.*

JERRY. You see, you forgot the overcoat altogether—oh, I beg your pardon, but you were so funny.

ROSENBAUM. [*Angrily.*] Funny! You ought to see yourself!

SMITH. [*Rushing to JERRY.*] Funny! You hold my play up to ridicule, kill it, and think it's funny!

[*He starts to the door at the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Where are you going?

SMITH. Home. Will you do me one favour?

ROSENBAUM. What?

SMITH. Take my name off the programme.

[*He goes, slamming the door. The noise of the row attracts the notice of the company, who come running back to their former positions in time to hear SMITH'S farewell speech. There is a pause. MRS. DEAN, at first speechless with rage, breaks into a fierce tirade.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Indignantly.*] The base ingrate! He ought to be on his knees to me. To think how I've worked on his piffing play! I ask you all, could anybody who heard him read it, recognise it now? [*Tearfully.*] If it hadn't been for me, this play would never have seen New York. Nobody believes in it but me. I've worked myself into an untimely grave to give you all a season's run, and you're all against me. [*Crying.*] You're all against me, every last one of you! I'm just one lone woman against a band of pessimistic knockers. I can't stand any more!

[*She goes, sobbing. BETTY rises to follow her but is stopped by EFFIE, who runs out calling "Matilda, Matilda." The company, who have all been unanimous in their dislike of MRS. DEAN, have a revulsion of feeling now that she is apparently at the end of her endurance. Talking quietly and sympathetically everyone disappears, leaving BETTY almost in tears and JERRY remorseful.*

BETTY. Poor mother! She's utterly worn out!

JERRY. I never thought she'd take it so much to heart.

BETTY. It will just about kill her if it doesn't get over!

JERRY. Oh don't, Betty, you make me feel like a dog!

[*He moves away.*

BETTY. [*Following him.*] Why, Jerry, you're doing the best you can. It isn't your fault! I thought the play was awful when we read it, and when it didn't go on the road, I begged mother not to let Rosie bring it in, but she's mad about it. Of course, she can't see any further than that my part is good. Poor mother!

JERRY. [*Turning to her and taking her hands.*] Look here, Betty, if you ever heard that I'd done something that was—rotten—would you love me just the same?

BETTY. But you couldn't. Besides, I'd love you whatever you did!

JERRY. You'll remember that, won't you? Promise.

BETTY. Cross my heart! [*She does so.*] But why are you so serious?

JERRY. Oh, it's nothing! We'll make it up to her.

BETTY. To mother. Make up what?

JERRY. We'll be mighty kind to her if anything happens to disappoint her, won't we?

BETTY. Why, of course! But you are always kind to her. I'll go to her now.

[She kisses him and starts to the door.]

ROSENBAUM. *[Entering.]* Are you two scrapping now?

BETTY. No. Jerry's worried for fear the piece may fail.

[She goes.]

ROSENBAUM. What? Say, what's happened to you?

JERRY. Mrs. Dean's got me going, that's all. I almost wish it wasn't going to fail!

ROSENBAUM. Well, you'll lose your wish.

JERRY. Looks like a sure-fire failure, eh?

ROSENBAUM. *[Smiling.]* I made arrangements today to invest that five thousand dollars.

JERRY. I didn't know. You seemed so interested to-night. I thought perhaps you liked it.

ROSENBAUM. I can't help it. I seem to like anything when it gets as far as the dress rehearsal.

JERRY. *[Starting to follow BETTY.]* Well, I'm going to make a clean breast of my scheme to Betty.

ROSENBAUM. *[Stopping him.]* Don't speak to her, not before we open! She'll make a hit. That's all her mother wants. She'll blame the play. And just think of the things she'll say about the author!

[MRS. DEAN returns, wiping her eyes, BETTY and EFFIE accompanying her. TOMPKINS appears at the rear door.]

BETTY. Now, mother, what do you want us to do?

MRS. DEAN. We'll rehearse the curtain calls on this act.

TOMPKINS. Everybody on stage, please. First call, everybody. *[MRS. DEAN goes to the right and ROSENBAUM to the left. BETTY and JERRY take their positions in the exact centre, JERRY to the right of her. JOHNNY enters and*

comes to the left of BETTY.] [*Irritably.*] Miss Donahue, you're over there.

[*He pushes her into place next to JOHNNY, shoves MISS TOBY next to her. MRS. DEAN is arranging the other end of the line. BILLINGS gets into the wrong place.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Impatiently to BILLINGS.*] Haven't you any dramatic instinct?

[*She grabs BILLINGS and puts him next to EFFIE, then returns to the extreme right. TOMPKINS takes his place. The line-up for the "call" from left to right is MISS TOBY, BILLINGS, EFFIE, JERRY, BETTY, JOHNNY, MISS DONAHUE, TOMPKINS and MISS FARRINGTON.*

TOMPKINS. Curtain up! [*He gives the signal for the imaginary curtain. Everybody bows and smiles.*] Curtain down! [*Everybody looks bored. This business is repeated for all the curtain calls.*] Second call—Principals.

[*All run off excepting JOHNNY, EFFIE, JERRY, BETTY and BILLINGS, and TOMPKINS, who joins ROSENBAUM.*

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Billings, we said—*principals!*

BILLINGS. Quite so.

ROSENBAUM. Get off, you're a "bit"!

[*BILLINGS goes grumbling.*

TOMPKINS. Curtain up! [*They repeat the bowing and smiling.*] Down! Third call. Miss Dean, Mr. Belden and Brinkley. [*EFFIE runs off quickly.*] Up! [*Business as before.*] Down. Fourth. Miss Dean and Belden [*JOHNNY goes.*] Up. [*The same business.*] Down.

MRS. DEAN. [*Proudly.*] And now—Betty.

[*JERRY runs out the rear door. BETTY goes up the centre carrying her train. She starts down stage to the left, dropping her train carefully. Then BETTY stops as though surprised by a burst of applause. She bows.*

MRS. DEAN. Shrink, darling, shrink! [BETTY goes up the stage shrinking.] Hold out your hand.

[BETTY holds out her hand as though desirous of bringing someone to share her triumph. When she gets to the rear door, JERRY jumps on and takes her outstretched hand. BETTY is annoyed.]

BETTY. [Complainingly.] Mother!

MRS. DEAN. [Furiously.] Get off! Get off! [JERRY hurries out.] Now darling, if those ushers earn their money, drag on the company one by one. Save Effie until the last. I'll show you. Oh Effie! [BETTY moves away and watches MRS. DEAN, who, smiling sweetly, gambols across to the door at the right. EFFIE is a trifle slow in coming on. MRS. DEAN jerks her through the door.] Oh, hurry up! [She takes EFFIE, who is very sulky, to the centre, makes a deep bow to her, then putting her arm around EFFIE, turns to BETTY.] See, dear, this is always good for another one.

ROSENBAUM. Smile, Effie, smile!

EFFIE. Do I have to rehearse the smile?

[She smiles staggily, looks angrily at MRS. DEAN, then stalks off.]

MRS. DEAN. Now, darling, look for the author. [She trips around from left to right looking off in the wings for an imaginary author, then advancing to the footlights, smiles coyly at an imaginary audience.] I don't know where the author is. [To BETTY in a business-like tone.] Try it, darling.

[BETTY imitates the "business" of looking for the author and in doing so sees ROSENBAUM.]

BETTY. Do I look for Rosie, too?

MRS. DEAN. [Disgustedly.] No. He'll be out in front applauding. And now the speech.

BETTY. [BETTY, advancing to the centre, smiles very brightly.] I don't know where the author is.

MRS. DEAN. [Very kittenishly.] Be coy, Betty, be coy!

BETTY. [Imitating her.] I don't know where the author

is. I can't make a speech, except to say that we're all very happy and we've worked very hard——

ROSENBAUM. Cut that out. They don't give a damn how hard you've worked.

BETTY. We're all very happy. [*Very brightly*] and I thank you.

MRS. DEAN. [*Tearfully.*] Cry, Betty, cry.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I thank you. I thank you.

[*She backs up the stage bowing.*

The curtain is lowered to indicate a lapse of time.

SCENE TWO: *The First Night*

After the curtain falls there is an instant of time, then ROSENBAUM appears in the left upper stage box of the theatre. He looks over its railing at the audience, then sits with his back to the stage mentally "counting the house." MRS. DEAN, following him, looks over the railing at the audience and then seats herself facing the stage. SMITH comes in and, sitting between them, nervously crumples a programme. ROSENBAUM is in a dinner jacket, SMITH in evening clothes, MRS. DEAN in a wrap and over her head a scarf which she removes. The idea sought to be conveyed is that the curtain is rising on the final scenes in the third act during the first performance of "Dora's Dilemma."

The curtain rises to disclose a completely furnished stage setting representing the library in the ROBERT CHAPMAN home. EFFIE, as MRS. BENNETT, is seated on the couch. BETTY, as DORA CHAPMAN, is speaking to her.

DORA. But, Mrs. Bennett, has the firm missed the bonds?

MRS. BENNETT. Not yet, but if Dick does not restore them by ten o'clock tomorrow morning their loss will be discovered, and my son will be arrested and branded as a thief!

DORA. My God! But why did Dick give those securities to my husband?

MRS. BENNETT. Mr. Chapman said he wanted the use of ten United States bonds for just twelve hours. He promised faithfully to return them to Dick tonight. He's failed him again. Now Dick has gone home hoping to find them there.

DORA. How did you learn all this?

MRS. BENNETT. Dick's been anxious all the evening. You noticed it. I saw him come in here, followed him and found him ransacking that desk. Then I made him tell me.

DORA. But why should Dick run this risk?

MRS. BENNETT. Because of you.

DORA. Because of me?

MRS. BENNETT. Your husband threatened him!

DORA. What about?

MRS. BENNETT. A divorce suit, naming Dick as co-respondent.

DORA. That's absurd. He knows it isn't true.

MRS. BENNETT. The coupling of your names would be enough to ruin you both.

DORA. The beast! To think of all the wrongs and humiliations that I have suffered in silence and then to threaten to drag me down, to ruin the man I love! Oh, I'll confess it. I do love your son. But you don't believe this of Dick and me?

MRS. BENNETT. [*Taking DORA's hands.*] No, no, I've suspected that my son loved you, and that you loved him. That's why I waited here after the others had gone, to implore you to save him.

DORA. I will. I must! I'll find some way to get those bonds.

[*Enter quickly JOHNNY, as CHAPMAN, from the rear door. He wears a business suit and carries a bag. He stops at the sight of the women.*]

CHAPMAN. Oh, good evening. [*MRS. BENNETT rises.*] Oh, don't let me drive you away.

[*He goes down to the desk and puts the bag on the end of it.*]

DORA. Mrs. Bennett was about to leave. Will you ring for Henderson?

[*CHAPMAN pushes the button on the desk. It rings off stage.*]

MRS. BENNETT. My son has been looking for you all evening.

CHAPMAN. [*Frightened.*] Is he here?

MRS. BENNETT. No, he's gone home.

CHAPMAN. [*Relieved.*] Make my apologies. Tell him I was delayed unexpectedly. That I'll see him in the morning.

MRS. BENNETT. [*Eagerly.*] Early?

CHAPMAN. [*Opening the bag.*] Nine o'clock at my office.

[*TOMPKINS enters as HENDERSON.*

DORA. Henderson, Mrs. Bennett's carriage.

[*MRS. BENNETT goes, followed by DORA. CHAPMAN crosses to the window where he stands beside the drawn curtains looking out. DORA returns.*

CHAPMAN. Dora, Dora, come here quickly. [*DORA crosses in front of CHAPMAN to the window.*] Do you see anybody out there?

DORA. A policeman!

CHAPMAN. Does he seem to be watching the house?

DORA. No.

CHAPMAN. Anyone else?

DORA. No.

CHAPMAN. Sure?

DORA. Yes.

CHAPMAN. [*Going to the desk quickly.*] Dora, you've got to help me.

DORA. Help you? How?

CHAPMAN. Someone I can trust must sail on the *Mauretania* tonight with this.

[*He indicates the bag on the desk.*

DORA. What have you done?

CHAPMAN. Unless late tonight when I give the alarm with this [*He takes a revolver out of his pocket*], I can be found here chloroformed [*He takes a bottle out of his pocket and puts it on the desk*], the safe in this desk opened, robbed, they can send me up.

DORA. Oh, Bob! Bob!

CHAPMAN. I was going to make a getaway, but I can't. The secret service men are watching me. Will you go?

DORA. I can't. I can't!

CHAPMAN. You'll be all right. I'll join you as soon as I can. There's plenty of money in that bag, and these ten United States Bonds are as good as cash. Will you go through with this for me?

[DORA recognises the bonds which he displays to her as those DICK has given CHAPMAN.]

DORA. Yes, yes.

CHAPMAN. Good.

DORA. [*Falling into the chair at the desk, as though fainting.*] Oh, oh, oh.

CHAPMAN. What is it?

DORA. I feel faint—the shock—some water—downstairs—the dining room. [*The moment CHAPMAN goes she shows that the faint was pretended and stealthily rising gets the telephone.*] Central, central; get me 84 Bryant, quickly, quickly. [*She waits anxiously.*] Hello, 84 Bryant? Oh, is that you, Dick. Can you hear me? I've got your bonds. Come here at once, come through the garden to the library window!

[*As BETTY is replacing the receiver, CHAPMAN enters.*]

CHAPMAN. To whom were you telephoning?

DORA. [*Frightened, then recovering.*] A wrong number!

[*She goes slowly up to the window to open it.*]

CHAPMAN. [*Watching her suspiciously.*] What are you doing?

DORA. It's so close in here.

[*She opens the window.*]

CHAPMAN. [*Going to the desk.*] Wrong number, eh? [*DORA watches him anxiously. He picks up the telephone.*] Central, what was that number just called from here? [*DORA starts from the window to him.*] 84 Bryant! [*DORA gives faint cry.*] Hub—I thought so. [*He replaces the receiver.*]

What did you have to say to Bennett? Come, out with it!

DORA. [*Hesitatingly.*] Nothing. I simply telephoned good-bye.

CHAPMAN. I wonder if you're putting up a job on me?

DORA. Don't be absurd. I must hurry. [*She starts to the door.*] We've no time to lose.

CHAPMAN. You're anxious to go, aren't you? Maybe Bennett's waiting for you? Is he?

DORA. Of course not.

CHAPMAN. What did his mother tell you tonight?

DORA. [*Hesitatingly.*] What could there be to tell?

[*She comes down to the back of the desk.*]

CHAPMAN. By God, that's why you gave in! His mother told you about the bonds. You're going to give them to him.

[*He makes a rush for her.*]

DORA. [*Picking up the revolver from the desk.*] Yes, I am. Give them to me.

[*She points the revolver at him across the desk.*]

CHAPMAN. [*Backing away a step or two.*] What? You——

DORA. I'm not afraid of you, I mean this.

[*CHAPMAN opens the bag which is on the desk, takes out the package of United States Bonds, and throws them on the desk. As she reaches for them he jumps, grabs her wrist, gets the revolver, then takes the bonds forcibly from her, and puts them in the bag. DORA sinks on the chair at the desk.*]

CHAPMAN. I might have known I couldn't trust you, I'll take a chance. I'll go myself, and you'll go with me.

DORA. I won't. I won't.

CHAPMAN. Oh yes you will, or I'll stay here and when Dick Bennett comes through that window——[*DORA gasps.*] Oh, that's why you opened it! I'll shoot him dead.

DORA. You wouldn't dare.

CHAPMAN. Dare? Invading the sanctity of my home. It mightn't be a bad idea at that. Wonder I didn't think of it instead of that chloroform stunt.

[Sitting in the chair in front of the desk, he leans over and opens the safe, and begins to empty it of its contents.]

I could plant the robbery on him. How would you like that for your lover? *[He laughs.]* You thought you had me beat! Me! That's funny. That's damn funny.

[He laughs, leaning back in his chair. At the mention of the word "chloroform" DORA takes the bottle from the desk and empties it on her handkerchief. CHAPMAN roars with laughter and says "Damn funny," DORA thrusts the handkerchief over his mouth, grabs his right arm and brings it up back of the chair. CHAPMAN struggles.]

DORA. You'll go? You'll stay here and be caught like a rat in a trap. You can disgrace me, shame me, but you won't make the man I love a thief! I've beaten you, do you hear? You beast! I've beaten you!

[CHAPMAN'S hand falling limply on the desk presses the button. The bell rings off stage. BETTY alarmed, listens, then dropping the handkerchief, she gets the bonds from the bag, and starts to leave when a door is heard to slam.]

DORA. My God! Henderson!

[She looks wildly about, holding the bonds in front of her, and runs down to the chair at the desk and falls forward as though in a faint.]

HENDERSON. *[Entering, sees the situation, then goes quickly, calling.]* Help! Help! Help!

[JERRY, as DICK, rushes in through the window.]

DICK. Dora, Dora! what's happened!

DORA. O Dick, here are your bonds.

DICK. O Dora, you have saved my honour.

DORA. He was going to run away, leave the country. I

chloroformed him. [*She puts the bonds in his overcoat pocket.*] Now, go, go.

[*A police whistle sounds faintly.*]

DICK. Leave you? No.

DORA. You must. There are the police. They'll never suspect me. Oh go, for God's sake go. [*She pushes him towards the window. The police whistle is heard nearer.*] No, no, get behind that curtain.

[*She pushes DICK behind the curtain at the window and starts for the door.*]

HENDERSON. [*Entering.*] Oh, Ma'am, are you all right?

DORA. Oh yes, yes.

[*Enter BILLINGS as a Policeman.*]

POLICEMAN. What is it?

DORA. Help me out of here.

[*HENDERSON leads her towards the door. CHAPMAN has been coming out of his daze.*]

CHAPMAN. Stop her. She robbed me!

POLICEMAN. Wait!

DORA. He doesn't know what he's saying. I'm his wife.
[*She tries to go.*]

CHAPMAN. [*Rising.*] Stop her. Search her. She chloroformed me, robbed me. [*He turns toward the window and sees the curtain move.*] And get that man behind the curtain.

[*DORA, who is at the door, turns off the lights. DICK rushes out. He and the Policeman struggle*]

CHAPMAN. Turn on those lights.

[*When the lights go up DICK is discovered wearing the overcoat with the bonds sticking out of the pocket, in plain view. DORA is at the couch looking wildly for the overcoat.*]

CHAPMAN. Search him!

POLICEMAN. Put up your hands! Put up your hands!

[*BILLINGS sees the overcoat, and the bonds. He is paralysed. A stage wait occurs.*]

MRS. DEAN. [*From the stage box.*] Great Heavens! He's got *on* the overcoat!

SMITH. [*From the stage box.*] I'll kill him!

[BILLINGS, JOHNNY, TOMPKINS and BETTY become panic-stricken, losing their characterizations completely. JERRY suddenly realises what he has done but is unabashed.]

JERRY. Come on, search me. [BILLINGS looks again at JERRY, then at JOHNNY.] Come on, you big boob, search me!

[*He hesitates.* JERRY jumps for him, knocks him down.]

BETTY. [*Wildly.*] What will I do? What will I do?

JERRY. Do. You'll come with me!

[*He dashes at JOHNNY who rushes off below the tormentor. JERRY then jumps on the desk, and leaps at TOMPKINS, who dodges. Then he grabs BETTY who has fainted and jumps out of the window.*]

ROSENBAUM. [*From the box.*] Ring down, Ring down!

TOMPKINS. [*Rushing off below the tormentor.*] Ring down!

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT

JERRY'S apartment in a Studio building in New York,—a simply and attractively furnished room with a door at the left to the bedroom and another at the back to the hall. There is a fireplace at the right and extending from it into the room, its back to the spectator is a large couch covered with corduroy. Facing it is a comfortable wing chair and a table with a reading light. At the left is a window with a cushioned seat and in front of it a handsome table with writing materials, a lamp, a rack of books and silver boxes containing cigarettes. Behind the desk is a chair, in front of it a bench with a cushion of corduroy. Against the back wall is a Jacobean cabinet and a table with a lamp. Another table for newspapers and magazines stands at the left end of the couch. There are framed photographs on the walls, the mantel-piece, the tables and the desk, all of BETTY in various poses. Bright sunlight is streaming through the windows.

WALTER, JERRY'S man-servant, has placed the morning papers and the mail on the desk and is starting for the bedroom carrying the coat of a suit when the door opens and JERRY appears.

JERRY. Good morning, Walters. What time is it?

WALTERS. Eleven o'clock. [Offering JERRY his coat.] Will you have your coat, sir?

JERRY. Yes. [Taking off his lounging jacket.] Did you get all the morning papers?

WALTERS. They're on the table, sir. Mr. Rosenbaum has been phoning. He'll be over later. [He takes the lounging jacket and starts to go. At the door to the bedroom he

stops.] Beg pardon for mentioning it, sir, but I hope "Dora's Dilemma" was a success last night.

JERRY. [*Angrily.*] Don't talk about it.

WALTERS. Oh no, sir. Thank you, sir.

[*He goes. JERRY takes a cigarette from a box on the table, and is getting a match, when there comes a knock at the door.*

JERRY. Come in. [*JERRY is lighting his cigarette, his back to the door, and does not see BETTY entering, carrying a suit case. She places it beside the door, then with a little sob comes towards JERRY, who, hearing the sound, turns and goes to her quickly.*] Betty! Good heavens, Betty, what's happened? What are you doing here? Where's your mother?

BETTY. Oh, stop asking me questions and kiss me.

[*JERRY takes her in his arms and kisses her.*

JERRY. There! Now tell me, what's happened?

BETTY. [*Surprised.*] Haven't you read the papers?

JERRY. I haven't had time.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] Mother will never let us get married now.

JERRY. Why?

BETTY. The play's a hit.

JERRY. [*Staggered.*] What!

BETTY. Look at the papers!

[*She gets a paper from a table at the end of the couch and hands it to him.*

JERRY. It can't be true! [*Reading.*] "The dramatic sensation of the century."

BETTY. What did I tell you?

[*She sits on the couch, her back to the spectators.*

JERRY. It can't be a success! Your mother had hysterics after I bawled up that third act finish.

[*He begins to read the review.*

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I know. She scolded me, too. I went home so happy. Then this morning the first paper I looked at said: "Not since Maude Adams took New York by storm

has any actress won such instant favour as Bettina Dean." I'd like to boil that man in oil.

[*She cries again.*]

JERRY. [*Gloomily, from behind the newspaper.*] I was a hit too.

BETTY. The critics must be crazy. You were awful.

JERRY. But you saw what they wrote about me.

BETTY. Yes, one of them said—"Where has Jerome Belden been? Why have we been deprived of him all these years?"

JERRY. Listen to this son-of-a-gun—[*Reading*] "Not in the memory of the oldest playgoer has the New York stage given to us so charmingly unconventional an actor as Jerome Belden. Even the baldly melodramatic climax of the third act was handled by Mr. Belden with such utter disregard of conventional method and technique. . . ." What's technique?

BETTY. Something you struggle all your life to get, that makes the public tired when you give it to them. Oh, dear!

[*She sobs.*]

JERRY. Don't, Betty, don't.

[*He sits on the couch beside her his back to the audience and takes her in his arms.*]

BETTY. How can those critics be so kind when they can be so mean?

JERRY. Oh, maybe this is just newspaper talk.

BETTY. [*Releasing herself.*] Oh, I'm afraid they liked it. [*They turn, their arms on the back of the couch, looking directly at the spectators.*] I saw all the first-nighters applauding.

JERRY. Yes; the whole lodge was there.

BETTY. What lodge?

JERRY. The Ancient Order of Grave Diggers.

BETTY. They gave us fifteen curtain calls.

JERRY. Oh, that's just first-night stuff.

BETTY. No, if those Grave Diggers like a thing, they go out and rave about it.

[*She cries. JERRY turns and takes her in his arms, both again with their backs to the spectators.*

JERRY. Well, maybe it won't draw.

BETTY. Draw? Mother says it will run all season.

JERRY. Some plays run in New York for two years.

BETTY. Don't, Jerry, don't.

[*She sobs.*

JERRY. Look at Monte Cristo!

BETTY. [*Sobbing wildly.*] And Rip Van Winkle!

JERRY. Oh, who'd pay to see this show?

BETTY. Go call up the box-office.

[*JERRY rises and goes to the telephone on the table at the left of the room. BETTY wipes her eyes.*

JERRY. Never thought of that. What's the number?

BETTY. 68o Bryant. Mother was 'phoning this morning.

[*She rises and follows JERRY.*

JERRY. Give me 68o Bryant.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I'm the most miserable woman in the world.

JERRY. Don't take it so much to heart.

BETTY. Mother says it's absurd to talk of marriage in the face of this success.

JERRY. What? Busy? Call me.

[*He places the telephone on the table.*

BETTY. [*Despairingly.*] Surely they can't be telephoning for seats already?

[*She sinks on the bench beside the table. JERRY gets a chair and brings it towards her.*

JERRY. It's a judgment.

BETTY. What do you mean?

JERRY. Betty, I've a confession to make.

[*He hangs his head guiltily.*

BETTY. [*Alarmed.*] Jerry, don't tell me you've learned to like the stage.

JERRY. [*Despairingly sitting in the chair.*] No, worse than that.

BETTY. Nothing could be worse. Go on, tell me.

JERRY. [*In the manner of a stage confession.*] You remember the night Rosie made the proposition to star you?

BETTY. Yes, I'll never forget it or forgive him.

JERRY. Don't say that! I was responsible.

[*In deep despair he bows his head in his hands.*]

BETTY. What?

JERRY. Yes. I furnished the backing.

BETTY. To make me a star? Why?

JERRY. [*Seriously.*] Because I loved you.

BETTY. [*Indignantly.*] Well, you had a nice way of showing it.

JERRY. Your mother had said it would be death to your career to be associated with a failure—well, I made up my mind you'd fail.

BETTY. You darling.

JERRY. Rosie had a lot of plays in his grip. I hadn't read any of them. I just picked this one out blindly, thinking, of course, that I'd pick a failure.

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, why didn't you leave the choice to Rosie?

JERRY. Why?

BETTY. It takes someone who knows about plays to pick a failure.

[*The telephone bell rings sharply.*]

JERRY. [*Rushing to the telephone.*] Hello, 680 Bryant? I want a couple of seats for tonight. What? One in the fifteenth row. *Four weeks from Monday!* Oh, this is awful! [*BETTY sobs aloud.*] I'll never be able to live this down. I'll never dare to show my face at the Club again.

BETTY. And I'll never be Mrs. Jerome Belden now.

[*JERRY in his irritation is walking up and down; he stumbles over BETTY'S suit case, and gives it a vicious kick.*]

JERRY. What the devil's that?

BETTY. [*Sniffling.*] That's mine.

JERRY. Oh, excuse me. [*He picks up the suit case, puts*

it tenderly and puts it on the chair beside the bench.]

Yours? Where are you going?

BETTY. Nowhere. I've come to stay.

JERRY. Here?

BETTY. Yes.

JERRY. You can't do that. I'd forgotten. You oughtn't to be here now. How did you get up here?

BETTY. I gave the elevator boy five dollars.

JERRY. [*Growing agitated.*] Good Lord, did anyone downstairs see you?

BETTY. Yes, a lot of hall boys.

JERRY. I'll fix them. They didn't recognise you?

BETTY. I didn't wear a veil on purpose.

JERRY. [*Very agitatedly.*] Come, Betty, you must get out of here. Your mother might miss you, begin to look for you.

BETTY. She knows I'm here.

JERRY. What? Did you tell her?

BETTY. No, she went out early this morning, but I left a note.

[*JERRY frantic, takes BETTY'S hands and tries to draw her to her feet.*

JERRY. Then come on; if she finds you here, it will be terrible.

BETTY. [*Impatiently, pulling her hands away.*] I want her to find me here.

JERRY. She mustn't, Betty. Oh, I can't put it into words, but it's impossible. This is a bachelor apartment. Don't you appreciate the situation?

BETTY. Perfectly, I'm trying to be compromised. This is our only chance.

JERRY. Have you gone insane? I must take her to an alienist.

BETTY. [*Indignantly.*] If you loved me, you'd take me to a minister.

JERRY. I will, Betty, I will, after we see your mother. We played the game squarely, we won't sneak now.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] You don't love me any more.

JERRY. [*Taking her in his arms.*] I do, Betty, I do. I love you too much to let you marry me on the sly. Now, come on, dry your eyes, powder your nose, I'll order the car, we will drive to the Claremont, have some luncheon, then fortified, we'll call on mother, and read the riot act. [*The telephone rings.*] Hello, Mrs. Dean calling? Tell her I'm not in.

BETTY. [*Running to him.*] No—no. [*She speaks into the telephone.*] Ask her to come right up. [*JERRY tries to talk into the telephone. BETTY puts her hand across the mouthpiece.*] Say one word and I'll never speak to you again.

JERRY. This is going to take some explaining.

BETTY. Leave it to me.

JERRY. Your mother has every right to be furious. Every right to suspect me. Every right to prevent our marriage now.

BETTY. Just let her try it. [*There is a knock at the door.*] Quick, Jerry. [*She grabs him, throws herself into his arms, puts his arms around her. JERRY struggles. BETTY holds his hands firmly.*] Come in!

[*MRS. DEAN comes in, smilingly, arrayed in a gorgeous gown, a fur trimmed wrap of brocade, and a befeathered picture hat.*]

MRS. DEAN. Good morning, children. Gaze on your mother—"Success," *Herald*.

[*She sweeps across in front of them to display her clothes.*]

BETTY. Mother, don't you see us?

MRS. DEAN. There's nothing the matter with my eyesight.

BETTY. Mother, don't you see us? I'm compromised.

JERRY. No—no!

MRS. DEAN. [*Graciously.*] Bless my little girl. Your mother's here. I came as soon as I found the note. [*She strokes the fur on the sleeve of her wrap.*] Isn't it a lovely

piece of fur? They say it's sable, but I believe if you stroked it the wrong way, it'd put up its back and spit at you.

BETTY. Mother, will you pay attention to us?

MRS. DEAN. [*Parading across the room.*] My dear, don't be selfish. Let me enjoy my glad raiment. After I read the papers and 'phoned to the box-office, I said, "Matilda, go out and squander."

JERRY. The hit's gone to her head.

[*He sits on the bench.*

MRS. DEAN. I went straight to the dressmaker's. He says, I'm a perfect 40, the rascal. [*She giggles.*] Betty. [*BETTY goes to MRS. DEAN, who takes her aside and whispers.*] Everything underneath this is embroidered crêpe, and I wish you could see the lilies of the valley on my corsets!

BETTY. You look lovely. You know how glad I am that at last I see you looking——

MRS. DEAN. Rich and recherché.

BETTY. But it would have been more profitable and more to the point if instead of visiting the dressmaker's you had spent the time at the dramatic agencies.

MRS. DEAN. [*Majestically.*] My day for bending the knee to the dramatic agents is over. In future, they'll salaam to the mother of Bettina Dean. [*BETTY, shaking her head hopelessly, joins JERRY on the bench.*] I don't mind telling you two in strictest confidence that I'm going to be a power in this business. You saw what the newspapers said about my prediction of this play. I've always thought I could do a few things to Ibsen.

BETTY. [*To JERRY.*] Oh, it's hopeless!

[*MRS. DEAN pays no attention to him. She takes off her wrap and throws it over the couch on which she poses, then smiles in a stagey way at JERRY.*

JERRY. [*Coming to her.*] Mrs. Dean, this is serious.

MRS. DEAN. [*Contentedly.*] What's "serious"?

JERRY. On Saturday night Betty and I say a fond farewell to Dora and her Dilemma.

MRS. DEAN. What? Are you going mad?

BETTY. Yes, if being married is going mad.

[*She rises and goes to JERRY.*

MRS. DEAN. Married? Utterly impossible.

[*BETTY starts to talk; JERRY quiets her.*

JERRY. Let me talk, Betty. [*BETTY retires and sits on the bench by the table.*] Now, Mrs. Dean, you've kept us apart on the plea that you wanted to see Betty on Broadway. You can take a long lingering look at her for five more nights, and, of course, the usual matinées.

[*He sits on the bench beside BETTY.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] What do you mean?

JERRY. Sunday we're married!

BETTY. No. today; I'll take no more chances.

JERRY. Suits me, darling. Then on Sunday we start on a still hunt for that farm with the chickens and the little calf.

MRS. DEAN. I won't permit it.

JERRY. Then I'm afraid we won't wait for the permit.

[*ROSENBAUM bursts in. He, like MRS. DEAN, exudes prosperity in every line of the palpably new morning coat, silk hat, boutonniere and gloves. He is beaming.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, we put it over. Didn't I always say it was a great play?

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum, I'm so glad you've come.

ROSENBAUM. I'd have been here before, but I was looking over the plans for the Rosenbaum Theatre.

MRS. DEAN. Talk to these children. I can't do anything with them. They're impossible.

[*She sits on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to her.*] You've got to make allowances after the hit they made last night. It's the artistic temperament.

MRS. DEAN. It's rank nonsense.

ROSENBAUM. It's the same thing. [*He goes to JERRY*

and sits on the chair beside the bench.] Jerry, didn't I always say it took just one fat part to make a Broadway star? Find out what they like in your personality and hand it to them. When you get old you keep on handing it to them and they think it's character acting.

MRS. DEAN. We've no time to listen to your theories of acting, even if you had any. They threaten to stop acting altogether on Saturday night.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] What?

JERRY. That's right.

[*He rises and goes to ROSENBAUM.*

ROSENBAUM. Never.

JERRY. [*Threateningly.*] Who's going to make me act?

MRS. DEAN. Nobody can do that, the critics notwithstanding.

ROSENBAUM. You don't dare quit.

JERRY. Don't I? You forget I own this show.

MRS. DEAN. What? You?

[*She rises.*

JERRY. Yes. I put up the money for "Dora's Dilemma."

MRS. DEAN. [*Indignantly.*] Why wasn't I told?

[*She glares at ROSENBAUM, who sneaks away.*

JERRY. Because I didn't want you to feel under obligations to me.

MRS. DEAN. Obligations? To furnish a few paltry thousands to put my daughter where she belongs? It was a privilege. Nevertheless, it was very generous of you. Betty, why don't you thank this noble-hearted man for all he has done for you?

BETTY. Thank him!

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to MRS. DEAN.*] Listen to her, she's as bad as Belden. But why expect gratitude from actors?

JERRY. Gratitude to you? [*He goes to him furiously.*] A fat lot you've done for us. Where's that failure you guaranteed me?

ROSENBAUM. [*Handing him a check.*] Here's your \$5,000. I don't need it.

MRS. DEAN. What's this I hear about failure?

[ROSENBAUM *moves away again.*

JERRY. He promised me that it would fail. I relied on him.

MRS. DEAN. So, young man, you were going to put one over on mother?

JERRY. You've put it all over us. Let that satisfy you. But don't waste your time gloating. You'd better bend all your energies to finding two people to play our parts, and finding them quickly.

[*He picks up BETTY's suit case. BETTY joins him, and they start toward the door. MRS. DEAN rushes to intercept them.*

MRS. DEAN. You children don't realise what you're doing. You can't leave this cast. You're both necessary to the success of the play.

ROSENBAUM. You leave it and it won't draw a cent.

JERRY. We don't need the money.

ROSENBAUM. What about me?

JERRY. Oh, you!

MRS. DEAN. What about the others? You can't stop the run of this play, throw all these people out of employment. Think of Effie and Johnnie. Would you take away their livelihood? Drive them back to a life of care and worry? You can't do that unless you're both marked with a wide streak of yellow.

BETTY. Jerry, I suppose we must think of the others.

[*JERRY throws down the suit case in disgust. There is a slight pause, then he advances on ROSENBAUM in a fury.*

JERRY. Why didn't you tell me if this was a success I could not get out of it without hurting other people? You promised me faithfully that my acting would kill it. Why didn't you warn me that I was in danger of making a hit?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, how did I know you had what gets across, whatever the damn thing is.

JERRY. [*Going to MRS. DEAN.*] If I stick to this thing— [*BETTY protests.*] I don't say I will. I'll do it on one condition, Mrs. Dean, that you withdraw your opposition to my marriage with Betty.

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to JERRY.*] You marry Betty over my dead body.

JERRY. [*Shaking his fist in ROSENBAUM'S face.*] Oh, I'd go to the chair for you.

[*He goes and sits on the table, his back to them.*]

BETTY. I'll play Dora and her old Dilemma with a wedding ring or not at all.

[*She joins JERRY and sits with her back to them.*]

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, are you going to stand there and see them ruin me?

MRS. DEAN. Ruin us?

ROSENBAUM. Who's going to pay \$2 to see a man make love to his own wife? [*He runs across.*] Oh, Betty, be reasonable. I'll make a great actress of you.

MRS. DEAN. I've done that already, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, Betty, don't do this! Stick to me! To show you the kind of fellow I am, I'll let you both do Shakespeare.

JERRY. [*Furiously, jumping off table and going to ROSENBAUM.*] Shakespeare! You've done enough for me. Don't you think you can put me in tights.

BETTY. I have an idea. Why couldn't we be married quietly?

ROSENBAUM. [*Scornfully.*] Quietly? What can you do in New York quietly?

BETTY. No one need know.

ROSENBAUM. The reporters would get it in a minute. There's a bunch of them downstairs now.

JERRY. Why?

ROSENBAUM. I brought them around to interview you.

JERRY. [*Going quickly to the telephone at the end of the*

desk.] Hello, is this the office? Send those reporters up to Mr. Belden's room at once. Yes, at once. [BETTY looks at JERRY bewildered, ROSIE and MRS. DEAN, horrified. JERRY goes over to them.] Now you listen to me. I'm willing to think of you and Effie and Johnnie and the others. I'm willing to go on acting and acting and acting, to serve my sentence, so that you can go on producing and producing and producing. You can do your Shakespeare and you can do your Ibsen provided we can get married. Oh quietly—I'll keep the marriage a secret. Either you do this or I'll give that bunch of reporters a story of our engagement that will spread over the front page of every paper in this town. Now, it's up to you. [There is a knock at the door. He lowers his voice.] There they are. Now think and think fast.

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] What will we do?

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] What can we do?

JERRY. [*Whispering.*] Come with us.

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] Where?

JERRY. [*Whispering.*] To the Little Church Around the Corner.

ROSENBAUM. [*Getting MRS. DEAN'S coat from the couch, gives it to her, whispering.*] For God's sake go, but go quietly.

JERRY. [*Reaching out his hand to MRS. DEAN.*] Come, mother.

[BETTY, MRS. DEAN and JERRY start to the door at the left, walking on tiptoes. ROSENBAUM tiptoes to the other door. The knocking becomes louder. He motions to them to hurry and they go smilingly as he is about to admit the reporters.]

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